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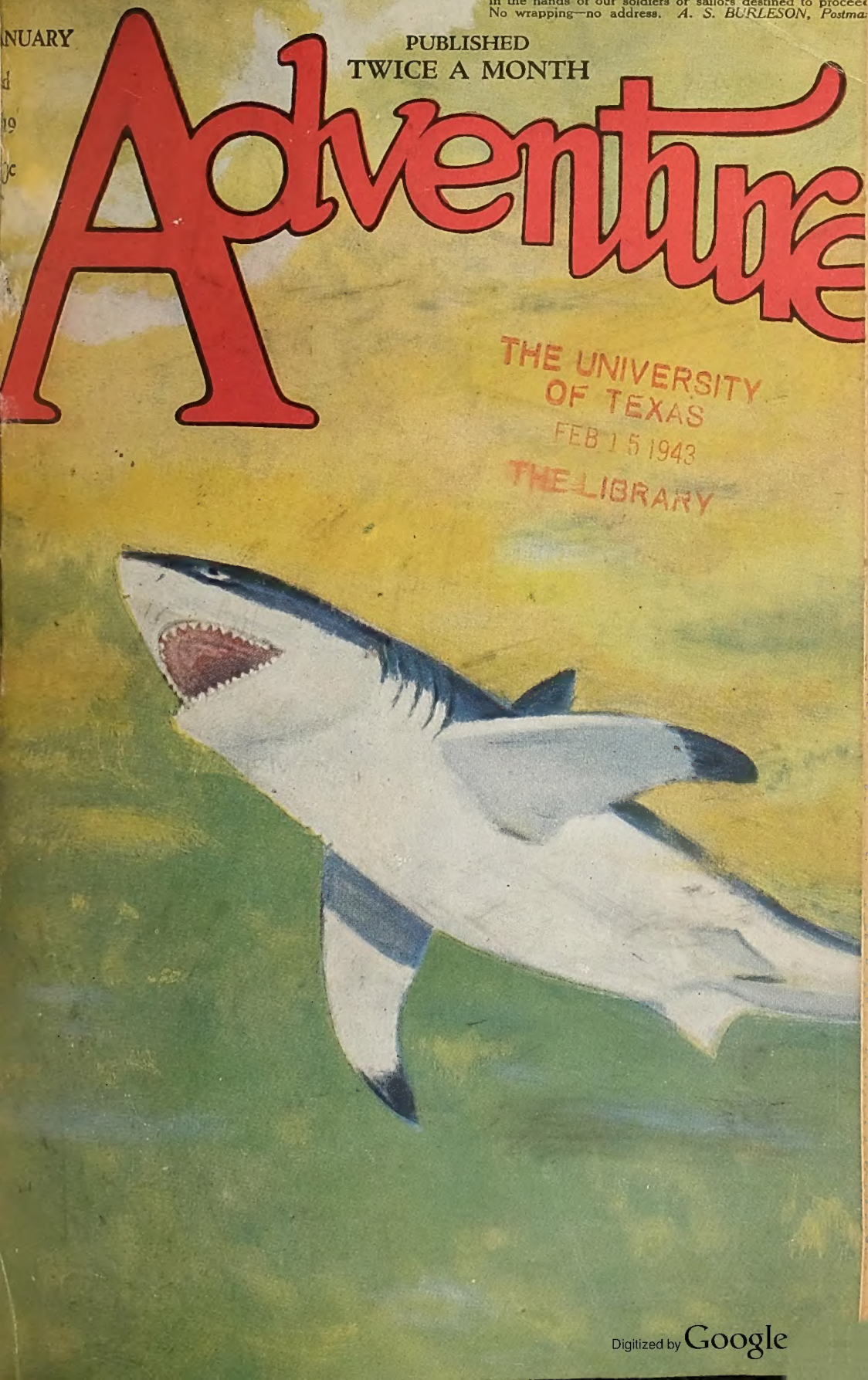

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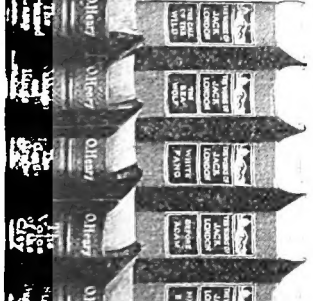

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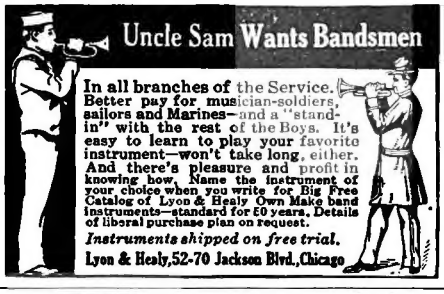
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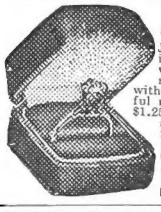

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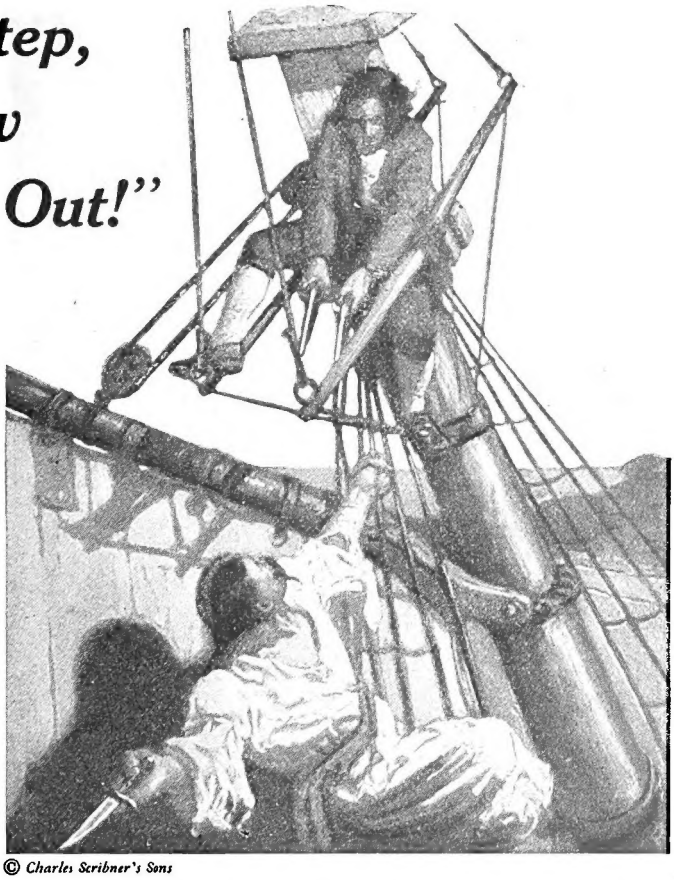

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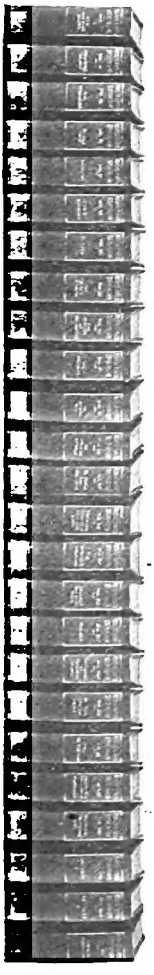

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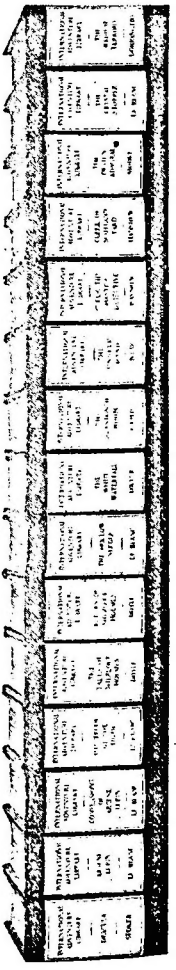

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Headings . . . . . **Will Crawford**

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WHEN KENTUCKY STARVED

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

by Hugh Pendexter

Author of "The Wilderness Trap," "The Vanishing Dead Man," etc.

THE desultory firing at the long stockade of the Boonesborough fort suddenly took on a fierce, staccato effect, and Dan'l Boone, first among woodsmen, found a peep-hole and surveyed the wall of green. Day and night the Shawnees and their ferocious allies, the Wyandots, closely besieged the fort, but this sudden uproar betokened the unusual. The firing increased in volume and was accompanied by much yelling. Boone mounted a three-foot section of log and made ready with his long rifle to take part in whatever dénouement the forest might spew forth.

He believed it was a prisoner essaying to escape to the fort, and he commanded his men to be ready to open the narrow gate should a fugitive appear.

Now the fringe of the forest was punctuated with puffs of smoke. At first Boone saw nothing except these anonymous indications of savage fury; then to his surprise he detected a movement among some bushes half-way between the fort and the woods. And he had observed nothing pass from the woods to the bushes.

He decided it was a trick, that some Indian, or white renegade, had hidden there all night, and he rested his rifle on the heavy stringer that bound the upright timbers together and prepared to spoil the ruse, whatever it might be. Now a score of Shawnees, painted and plumed, burst from cover and advanced in a furious focus on the bush growth, quite ignoring the danger of the fort's fire.

"It may be all a game, but I'll play," grimly murmured Boone, selecting a tall savage in the lead and shooting him through the head as neatly as ever he had shot a squirrel.

As he fired a bowed figure in deerskin burst from the cover and came sprinting toward the stockade. With howls of rage the Indians sent a final volley after the runner, who was miraculously spared to spring upward against the heavy timbers and clutch Boone's down-stretched arms. Catching the newcomer's wrists Boone surged back; the fugitive braced his feet against the timbers, humped his back, and came over the top like a gigantic frog.

As he dropped softly to his feet he removed his coonskin cap and straightened six feet of brawn and muscle and smiled whimsically.

"Simon Kenton!" exclaimed Boone, oblivious to the frenzied cries of the baffled Indians. "How be ye?"

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And the builder of the Wilderness Road grasped the hand of the twenty-one-year-old blond giant and shook it mightily.

"Better for seeing you with my hair on, Dan'l," drawled Kenton, beaming delightedly upon the one man of the whole frontier who surpassed him in woodcraft. "Thought I'd drop in and say howdy." Then with a grin over his shoulder, "Those reds seem fussed up. How's fodder?"

Boone's blue eyes clouded, but instead of answering the query he took notice of the several men and boys eager to press forward and welcome the famous scout. The coming of Kenton was worth more than reinforcements of three score men. There was a magic in his presence that transmuted forlorn hopes into glorious certainties.

"I 'low the boys want to say 'howdy,' Simon. Then we'll talk about th' fodder."

He motioned for the grinning frontiersmen to advance, which they did by ducking low and keeping close to the stockade.

"No time for yappin'," warned Boone.

The men and youths chuckled as though the situation invited jokes, and hungrily stretched forth their hands. Kenton with a broad grin that encompassed the little group extended both hands, saying—

"Heard you fellows had about wound up this little game down here, but I was determined to git in before it was entirely finished."

"With ye 'n' Dan'l I reckon it'll be finished mighty soon an' finished right," cackled a defender whose hair had grown white during a long life of fighting the Indians.

"Jest a handshake. No time for powwows," genially warned Boone. "Be gittin' back afore they're up to somethin' new."

With another round of handshakes and much clapping of hands on the broad shoulders the defenders scuttled back to their posts, leaving the two leaders together. Boone's face grew stern again, and he reverted to Kenton's query by saying:

"Ye ask 'bout fodder. It's bad. I've got to go out tonight an' git some. Th' last time I sneaked out I had to go nearly fifty miles afore I dast bag anything."

"I left a dressed deer a mile down the river. We'll fetch that in once it comes night."

Boone was all optimism again, and he chuckled softly at the good news. The deer would keep the fort going for a day or more, and in Kentucky in this Spring of starvation, 1777, that man was fortunate who had twenty-four hours of life assured for him.

"That's mightily neighborly of ye, Simon," he rejoiced.

"It's hid on t'other side of the river. I'd had less trouble getting here if I'd stuck to that side, but I got curious to know just what they was up to and swung across on a little scout."

"The Wyandots an' some other Northern tribes are with the Shawnees this time," said Boone.

"I found the hair of a Wyandot," said Kenton, removing a gruesome trophy from the belt inside his hunting-shirt and hanging it over the stockade.

A fiendish howl from the forest testified to the savages' keen vision.

"Reckon they think to rub us all out this trip. Reckon George Rogers Clark's got the right of it when he says this attack ain't because the Injuns are mad at losing these hunting-grounds down here."

"Then what be they mad at?" asked Boone in surprise. "What is the trouble?"

"Detroit, Vincennes and Kaskaskia forts are the trouble," retorted Kenton. "The forts have made big promises to the redskins if they'll wipe out the white settlements in Kentucky. Clark says this country can't be saved till the Ohio country is licked in good shape. The forts keep the Injuns coming and keep them supplied with guns and lead. We've held our own down here without help; but if they keep this up we'll be worn to the bone in no time."

"Last Summer they could 'a' done us for good if they'd bunched their attacks on the forts," mused Boone. "But they wasted their time an' strength in raidin' single cabins an' outlyin' settlements. Howsomever, once they rub us out then comes Virginy's turn."

"So Clark says, and he's keen to attack them in their villages above the Ohio."

"Clark's a great man," declared Boone, with never a thought of jealousy for the famous pioneer and Indian fighter who surpassed him in but one quality, that of prophetic vision. "Clark's a master hand at thinkin' out things. I can figger how to beat the Shawnees in a fight; but I never

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git time to figger jest what's behind their cussedness. Any news?"

"Two salt-makers scalped on the Licking. Woman captured near Rock Crossing. I stopped long enough to bury the salt-makers. All cabins I passed were empty or burned."

Boone wrinkled his nose in silent rage, but his voice was calm as he observed:

"Well, I'm mighty glad ye toted in the deer. Don't s'pose we could go for it afore dark."

"Not till tonight. Now I've come through their lines they'll be so sharp set a weasel couldn't repeat the trick. We'll go together tonight."

IT WAS a cruel anomaly, this paradise for hunters peopled with hunger-pinched faces. With a variety and quality of game never surpassed by any similar area, the settlers cooped up in the forts were verging on staryation. Elk, deer and buffaloes roamed the plains of white clover, bears frequented the cane-brakes, while the wild turkey in the wooded sections were so numerous as to seem one immense flock, extending from the Ohio to the lower Tennessee.

The forts at Harrodstown, Boonesborough and Logan's still resisted the invaders, but were sealed up. McClelland's Station on the Elkhorn, and Hinkson's Station on the Licking were abandoned. Harrodstown and Boonesborough, although but fifty miles apart, were isolated from each other.

The threat of extermination had blighted the fair country; and all because Hamilton the "Hair Buyer," commanding at Detroit, had induced the red hordes north of the Ohio to make one great effort to push the frontier back to the Watauga settlements. The Ohio River, the natural route to Kentucky, was a death-trap, so effectually was it blockaded by the Shawnees. The Wilderness Road, as blazed by Boone, was unsafe even for large forces of veteran Indian fighters.

The garrisons suffered cruelly for lack of food, and, although game might browse within sight of the stockades, no man could venture outside the stout defense without gambling with death, the odds always being against him. Now and then, by a seeming miracle, an express passed between Boonesborough and Harrodstown. Boone, because of his consummate woodcraft and cunning, occasionally stole forth at night and penetrated far behind the besieging lines and procured game, a portion of which he managed to get to the fort.

Having been tutored by Hamilton at Detroit the Indians were not repeating their tactical error of the preceding year. Now they were striking at the centers. If Kentucky failed to hold the line then the Watauga settlements and the Virginia frontier would be exposed to torch and tomahawk. And if the red tide could submerge Virginia the Southern colonies would be split away from their Northern sisters.

The panic of the previous Summer had combed out the weaklings and faint hearts from Kentucky. Frantic fugitives streaming through Cumberland Gap carried incoming settlers back with them. A party from Hinkson's Station had infected Boonesborough with their terror and had robbed it of ten defenders, despite all that Boone could say. To add to the plight of those remaining it was known that the Cherokees in the south were preparing to invade Kentucky.

If the red pincers closed then only God's help could save the entire border, from Pennsylvania down through the Carolinas. Thanks to Boone's stubborn spirit, and thanks to George Rogers Clark for bringing five hundred pounds of powder to Harrodstown and Boonesborough the previous Autumn, there remained a possibility of Kentucky's holding.

"If Harrodstown is taken will you try to fall back over the Wilderness Road?" asked Kenton.

"I'm through quittin'. I'll stick if I'm the only man left in Cantuck," declared Boone.

Kenton's warm approval of this avowal was stayed by a sudden crescendo of firing at the front of the stockade. The *spang, spang* of the lead against the stanch timbers came with the rapidity of rain-drops in a smart Summer shower and indicated the prodigal supplies possessed by the besiegers. Kenton glanced inquiringly at Boone and murmured—

"Coming in force?"

He would have joined the defenders swarming to the stockade had not Boone seized his arm, saying:

"That's what they want ye to think,

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Simon. But they won't rush us. Howsomever, when they waste lead like that they have some game on foot. If they don't figger to rush us they at least want us to think so. For why? To cover some trick at some other p'int. S'pose we take a peek at the river side."

Kenton grinned sheepishly and admiringly conceded—

"It's hard work to fool you, Dan'l."

Boone led the way to one of the log-cabins forming the corners of the stockade and mounted to the second story. This projected two feet over the first. There were no windows in the outside walls but through the loopholes the defenders could rake the curtains of the fort with deadly effect.

The huge quadrilateral measured two hundred and fifty feet on forest and river fronts, with a width of a hundred and twenty-five feet. There were gates in the middle of the longer sides. As the cabins at the corners could be separately defended the place could not well be taken by scaling until one or more of these little fortresses was subdued.

Given plenty of ammunition, food and water the fifty odd men and boys might hope to stand off repeated assaults. But food was a daily problem, the supply of water was inadequate and powder and lead none too plentiful; and with more than four hundred Shawnees and Wyandots surrounding the place the outlook was gloomy.

Nodding to the few men on guard Boone stood back a bit and peered through a loophole and scanned the opposite shore of the Kentucky. Kenton followed his example, and at last boasted—

"I'll bet my hunting-shirt I can cross the river and not meet a single red."

"Mebbe," muttered Boone, still puzzled to account for the furious gun-fire. "Still that hullabaloo has a answer, an' that answer is to be found where things seems to be quietest—ah!"

"Found it?"

"Ye'd lose yer shirt," murmured Boone.

He pointed to the placid current of the Kentucky. Kenton's sharp gaze quickly picked it up—a muddy streak in the water. Boone tersely announced:

"They're tunnelin' toward us. Goin' to try to mine us. Larned the trick from the Girty brothers, —— 'em! They're tryin' to hold our 'tention on t'other side while they skin to cover under the bank. An' they done what they figgered to do. They're there, out of range, an' diggin'. I opine we can do a leetle minin' on our own account."

The muddy ribbon seemed to start from a lightning-riven oak which stood on the bank some fifteen feet above the bed of the river. Leaving the blockhouse Boone advanced till abreast of this tree and ordered the men to commence digging a pit from which he proposed starting his countermine. With this precaution taken the two superborder men inspected the stockade carefully till they were back again opposite the gate on the forest side.

The fire was dropping, the Indians having achieved their object. None of the foes could be glimpsed, and the birds continued their mating songs in giant oak and graceful elm. The expanses of white clover were relieved by groves of maple, while on the rising ground beyond the river the sweet laurel completed a picture of primitive loveliness never surpassed and seldom equaled. Boone typed the spirit of Kentucky; or, perhaps, had breathed his mighty spirit into it until the region possessed a personality which was wanting in other unmapped spots.

If he was obsessed by the witchery of the land and attracted to it regardless of its dangers, so, too, had his kindly and daring nature thrown a glamour over the country and linked it for all time to the essence of romantic adventure.

Kenton curiously noted the expression of the strong profile as the pioneer forgot the Indians in the mild ecstasy of staring down the Kentucky valley. They were standing in the angle formed by a cabin wall and the stockade timbers and Boone was risking his life each second he remained at a narrow aperture, dreamily gazing at the fairy-land his perseverance was destined to transmute into homes. Kenton, less given to nature worship, observed that an occasional bullet was clipping by their heads in direct violation of all laws governing rifle fire on a horizontal line. He pulled Boone 'round the corner of the cabin and through the door, and explained:

"Lead's coming from the sky. Some redskin has climbed a tree outside the opposite wall. Mighty close shooting, too."

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Instantly Boone's forty-three years fell from him and left him a youth.

"Bet I git him afore ye," he challenged, stepping to a slot in the wall and surveying the forest-tops more than two hundred and fifty feet away.

But Kenton already had completed his preliminary scrutiny of several likely perches and was concentrating his attention on a sycamore.

"All right, Dan'l," he chuckled, and as he spoke he fired, the thin crack of his rifle evidencing the scant charge of powder behind the lead.

"Missed!" Boone taunted, but withheld his own fire as the foliage half-way up the tree became agitated.

Then a heavy body plunged through the lower branches to the ground.

"I'm proud of that shot as I had just about enough powder to make the distance," grinned Kenton.

"I'll tell the men to watch that spot. That tree oughter been chopped down, but we didn't have time. They got a cow two days ago. Saved us butcherin'."

"We'll fetch in that deer as soon as it gets dark," encouraged Kenton.

"We'll tote something out first," was the enigmatic response.

THAT night the darkness lay like thick velvet over fort and river. No lights were shown inside stockade or cabin, as the Indians would creep in close and fire through the loopholes. The defenders were withdrawn to the cabins with the exception of a few who stood guard over the thin cattle in the open.

With a final warning to each set of men Boone led the way to the river side of the defense and slipped over the stockade with Kenton. He was undertaking the hazardous venture because he must; Kenton relished such undertakings above everything else. The two crawled to the river unmolested, Boone coming last and moving more slowly because of what he carried under one arm. Without even a whisper Boone passed his burden over to his companion and moved off up-stream. Kenton neither heard nor saw him depart and knew he was gone only as he sensed his absence.

After some twenty minutes something gently stirred at Kenton's feet, and his inquiring fingers touched a wet paddle-blade. Following it cautiously he gripped the side of a canoe and touched the fringed sleeve fo a hunting-shirt. A hand met his and pressed it warmly. Boone had returned with a canoe. Kenton, moving with infinite care, gradually eased his burden into the middle of the frail craft and took his place in the stern. As he touched Boone on the back as a signal to proceed the canoe slipped down-stream, hugging the bank.

Although unable to see a foot before his nose Boone retained a strongly defined mental picture of the muddy water befouling the sweet current of the Kentucky and originating inshore near the shivered oak. The canoe lost its motion and the men sat motionless, holding their breath. Their trained ears could register nothing beyond the soft *lap, lap* of the water, the nocturne of insect life, and the frogs' careless chorus. Boone disembarked and reconnoitered for several minutes. On returning he placed his lips close to his friend's ear, and whispered:

"They've started diggin' under the oak as I opined. They've quit work for the night. Must be holdin' a powwow downstream somewheres. Gim'me the keg."

This time he was gone nearly half an hour and when he returned he patted Kenton's shoulder as though well pleased with his errand.

The canoe was pushed off, only instead of following the current it darted across to the opposite bank, where Boone with his marvelous memory for topographical detail, hesitated not in making a landing in a tiny cove, canopied and hidden by low-hanging branches. Kenton now assumed the lead, their course paralleling the river. Several times they made detours to avoid the camp-fires of the Wyandots. As they passed 'roúnd one camp Kenton halted, and whispered:

"Those camps are empty. They can't be near the fort, else we'd have heard some of them. They'd never leave the river side uncovered if they were up to deviltry."

"There's the reason. Hark!" hissed Boone, clutching Kenton by the arm.

From somewhere ahead burst forth a chorus of infernal exultation. As it ceased there came a thin, long drawn-out cry, the agonized protest of one being put to the torture.

"They've got some poor cuss!" groaned Kenton, starting off at double quick.

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They swung in toward the river till fended off by a cane-brake. Skirting this they breasted rising ground and entered a maple grove. Now they were in sight of a bright fire flaring from the river. Descending to the shore under the maples they became witnesses to a horrible scene.

The fire was burning on a sand-spit far out in the river, and 'round it were dancing the silhouettes of devils. Fastened to a stake was the prisoner, presumably a white man, his head hanging limp on his chest. As the two borderers came to a halt some extraordinary form of torture revived the victim, and he lifted his head to cry out.

"It's what you'd be glad to do for me, neighbor," muttered Kenton, raising his rifle and firing.

Almost as quickly Boone fired at the savage master of ceremonies; and the mercifully released white man and his red tormentor took the trail to the western stars together. This startling termination of the sport left the Indians stupefied for a moment. Then with fearful howls they dashed into the river toward the maples.

"It was a kindly thing to do," grunted Boone as he ran after Kenton. "It'll make it a 'tarnal sight harder to fetch in that deer, but it had to be did. Express from Logan's two days ago said three of their men was picked up. Two found sculped in a corn-field. This poor critter saved for the torture must 'a' been the third."

The darkness prevented the enraged Indians from discovering the trail, and believing the intruders must be making back to the fort they turned in that direction. At last Boone called a halt, saying—

"We've come a good mile. Where's it hid?"

"At the foot of a mighty big sycamore that overlooks the river. No other tree near it, but there's quite a lot of bushes 'round it. I picked it as being easy to find at night."

"My old syc'more!" fondly mused Boone, turning abruptly at right angles and confidently leading the way. "Fav'rite spot of mine. Saved my life more'n once when I've been chased by Shawnee an' Cherokee afore the fort was built. If ye'd prowled through the bushes to the very foot ye'd 'a' found a hole jest big 'nough for yer big carcass to squirm through. If ye'd gone into the hole ye'd found the tree was holler nearly up to where the big branches fork out.

"Got a bear in there the first time I seen it. Fact, the bear led me to it. I've used it as a hidin'-place more'n once. If ye'd gone inside ye'd found a war-club I made out of a knob-rooted saplin'. It's got my name cut on it. When I was a leetle boy back in Pennsylvany an' not big 'nough for to handle a rifle, I use to knock over small game with such-like clubs. I was mighty clever at it, too. Here we be."

Kenton pressed gently on his shoulder, and the two sank to their knees on the soft turf at the edge of the bush growth.

"Here's the deer. And something is following us."

Boone cocked his head and caught it, a gentle movement down the river bank. He signaled for Kenton to follow him, and keeping on his hands and knees wormed his way through a low-arched leafy tunnel to the base of the tree.

"Simon," he whispered, "here's the hole to the inside of the tree. Go in an' wait for me. I must go back with the meat. If I don't j'in ye afore mornin' ye'll know I'm a goner. If they git me I'd take it as a favor if ye would do some huntin' an' take the game into the fort."

"If ye don't show up, Dan'l, I'll take the meat in," promised Kenton.

Then he was alone.

ALTHOUGH it lacked several hours to sunrise Boone knew he was running a great risk in visiting the hollow sycamore in the opening. Heretofore when leaving the fort at night he had used the few hours of darkness to insure his flight to far outlying districts where he was measurably safe in discharging his rifle.

Now the morning light was coming and he was in the midst of his enemies. By this time the Wyandots, he knew, were back in camp on his side of the river, hot with rage over the anticlimax of their entertainment on the sand-spit. Their scouts too, would be unusually alert to prevent further audacity. Still Boone must go on for Kenton would be waiting for him. Halting at the edge of the opening in which stood the sycamore the pioneer sounded a bird-note as a signal of his coming.

The call remained unanswered even though he repeated it. He feared the worst; Kenton would never fail to keep an appointment and thereby permit a mate

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to run unnecessary risk. Boone was positive his friend was not at the sycamore, but regardless of the danger he must visit the hollow tree and learn why he was not there. Bending low he chose to run for it rather than to attempt to crawl the distance; and this because the glowing east fought against him.

He gained the bushes without any alarm being given and in another minute was on his knees examining the low opening. With all his woodcraft he could detect no sign of any one having entered through the hole. To eliminate all doubt he must go in, but before doing so he placed his fur cap on the end of his rifle and slowly pushed it inside.

Satisfied beyond all doubt that no foe lurked within the hidden retreat he glanced about him to make sure no Indians were in sight and then crawled into the hole. With a bit of dry moss and flint and steel he made a brief flare of light, sufficient to convince him the hollow tree had not been occupied. The glimpse the tinder-like moss afforded his keen gaze revealed the carpet of dry bark and dead leaves undisturbed, also the knob-rooted sapling, fashioned into a club and bearing the carving, "D. Boon." He fingered the club fondly and recalled how the childish practise had trained his arm for hurling the war-ax. On emerging from the hollow he took it with him.

Casting about, the increasing light allowed him to find the exact spot where he had parted from Kenton and also to mark the trail where the missing man had left the bushes to follow down the river. Instantly he applied the only logical explanation: the noise both had heard down the river bank was made by Indians hunting for them. After being left alone Kenton had been discovered, or believed he had been discovered, and rather than be cornered in a hole and hideously slaughtered he had elected to trust to his wits and the fragment of darkness left him, and had started off in full flight.

This theory was substantiated once Boone gained the river bank and found the trail of several men hurrying swiftly after the almost indiscernible trace left by Kenton's moccasins.

"That's it! They heard him among the bushes an' he didn't dast creep into the tree," decided Boone. "Here his signs are farther apart, showin' how he run for it."

At the next bend in the river he advanced another step in solving the tragedy. Here a second trail, broad and well defined in the white clover, as though made by a considerable party of savages, cut down to the bank at right angles. What was more illuminating was the clover trampled by scuffling feet and the sprinkle of blood over the white tufts. Kenton's trail, that of his pursuers, and the one coming in from the side, all ended at the river bank. The conclusion was obvious.

"They got him," said Boone sorrowfully. "While runnin' from one batch the other headed him off. He prob'ly run plumb smack into 'em. There was a fight an' he killed or wounded some of 'em. They captured him alive an' took him 'cross the river at this p'int."

His conviction that Kenton was taken alive was based on the absence of any mutilated remains and his knowledge that the Indians would strive their utmost to make him a prisoner. For Kenton was peculiarly hated by the Indians. Their enmity was a personal thing. His work as a lone scout had taken him many times to the very edge of their council fires where, unsuspected, he had overheard their plans and had spoiled many a projected raid.

Boone was feared as a mighty destructive force, because home-makers always swarmed in his wake. But Kenton was a personal and malignant agency, an exasperating annoyance that enraged all the more for his audacity and seeming immunity. Once a prisoner there could be but one fate for him.

"Lawd! The red varmints would come from the Canadas to see him go to the stake," shuddered Boone. This gruesome thought promptly extended a bit of hope, and he told himself—"Well, he's too big a prize to waste in a hurry. They'll want to save him for a reg'lar treat. That'll give me time to look 'round a bit."

Marking the spot where the three trails came to a bloody focus he proceeded downstream till he came to a point where the channel narrowed and the woods on either side crowded down to the water's edge. With the danger of discovery minimized to this extent he took the bold course and plunged in, holding his rifle high and having his powder-horn tied to the top of his head.

Wading and swimming he gained the

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bank and halted, half expecting to be pounced upon. He ceased his apprehensions, however, on catching a glimpse of a turkey-hen parading her chicks through the undergrowth. With the field clear he made up-stream, full in the face of danger, till opposite the spot where the Indians must have crossed with their prisoner.

A glance at the soft bank told the whole story. Many feet had danced in a whirling circle around the captive being hurried deeper into the forest. The Indians had learned a lesson from their experience on the sand-spit and did not propose to have another victim snatched from them prematurely. They were taking Kenton far back to some permanent camp, where they would not be interrupted.

These deliberate preparations allayed Boone's fears somewhat. Not only would they make a night of it when Kenton came to die, but they were bound to delay their pleasure until the forces 'round Logan's or at least Harrodstown could be present. The prolonged death of such a notable figure as Simon Kenton would, for the moment, overshadow even the capture of either of the forts.

Believing this, Boone took time to move circumspectly. This caution was rewarded along midday when he halted at a little stream and maneuvered cunningly to quench his thirst. It was while withdrawing from the water that he observed two figures rapidly approaching.

They were following the ancient Warrior's Path, which for time out of mind had been followed by Cherokee, Creek, Chicasaw, Shawnee, Wyandot and the tribes of the Long House. This thoroughfare crossed the brook a short distance below the pioneer's position. The Indians were running at a dog-trot and were making no effort at concealment. The one in advance was a Shawnee, as shown by his carefully plucked head and short scalp-lock.

He carried a green wand fashioned from a freshly cut sapling, and something dangled from the end that for a moment gave Boone the shivers. He thought it must be the entire scalp of his friend, then sighed in relief as he observed it was Kenton's fur cap. The second Indian by his cropped and roached hair should be a Wyandot. Their errand was very clear; they were messengers dispatched to Harrodstown to announce the festival of death and to invite attendance.

Boone's wits, whetted to a razor-edge of decisiveness, instantly appreciated that the spectacle would be postponed a reasonable time to permit of the arrival of guests; and his course of action was accordingly simple. Gliding along the bank until he reached the old trail he crouched under cover and made sure his rifle was ready. Placing it aside he drew his ax.

Along bounded the red men, leaping buoyantly into the air in an exuberance of spirits. Armed with the knob-rooted sapling and ax Boone kept under cover until the two splashed into the ford. They were within twenty feet of the bank before they saw him. With an inarticulate cry of astonishment and fear they made to turn about.

But the cunning Boone had acquired when a child in the Pennsylvania wilds sent the club with deadly precision, and the Shawnee went down with a choking grunt, the fur cap floating free. The Wyandot managed to face toward the opposite bank but the slippery footing threw him off his balance, and the ax ended its glittering revolutions to smash through the base of his skull.

"Two punkins busted," muttered Boone, plunging into the stream and recovering his ax.

He next pulled the limp bodies ashore and hastily concealed them beneath the bank. He regretted losing the club—this not from sentiment but because he realized that although a trifle in itself it might loom mighty large against him later. He could not know that his blazing the Wilderness Road was a deep notch cut in the trail that ultimately would lead to the Pacific; but he did know that should any redskin spy out that club an instant search would be made to learn its source and history.

He was almost inclined to try for it and for several moments stood undecided and watched it bob down the river. Then the current swung it inshore on the opposite bank and it became lodged in the grasses. The fur cap had disappeared, probably to the bottom of the river, he decided. Uplifted by the thought that the Harrodstown Indians would receive no invitation he continued along the trail he believed would lead to the Shawnee camp.

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KENTON was pegged out in regulation spread-eagle style in a glade deep in the forest. Several warriors lounged near him. Now that they had him, the most slippery enemy of their race, no chances were being taken. The guards gave back as a tall savage wearing turkey feathers in his scalp-lock and a grill of red and black paint over his face, advanced and looked down on the prisoner. He and Kenton were old foes, and a grim smile distorted the mask of paint as he gloated over his victim.

"The Weasel can not keep away from his friends, the Shawnees," he mocked.

"He is only happy when he is with Black Hoof (Catahecassa)," replied Kenton with a boyish smile.

"Catahecassa is more pleased to have him than to have the forts," replied the renowned chief, who was conspicuous at Braddock's defeat and was now the principal chief of the Shawnees. "The Big Turtle (Boone's Shawnee name) will next come to visit the Shawnees."

Kenton shook his head, glibly informing: "The Big Turtle has taken the Wilderness Road for the Watauga. He will come back with many riflemen and guns that speak with big voices. He will sweep the Shawnees and the cowardly Wyandots back to Detroit."

With an exclamation of rage a Wyandot warrior raised his ax but Black Hoof reached across the helpless body and caught the fellow's arm. The Wyandot sullenly lowered his weapon and stepped back. Kenton laughed softly, and taunted:

"I left a hank of Wyandot fur on the stockade at Boonesborough. It was so mangy the Big Turtle's people would not have it inside."

Black Hoof clapped his moccasin down on the youth's mouth with a force that threatened to cave in the teeth. As it was the lips were split and blood flowed.

"My Wyandot brothers will hang the Weasel's hair on the same stockade," promised Black Hoof.

Kenton gave a look of undying hate and licked his bloody lips and quietly retorted:

"And there was one killed on the sandspit, when the Shawnees, like children torturing a dog, foolishly played in the open. And there was another I struck down on the banks of the Kentucky. The Shawnees have paid a big price for my scalp. Nor am I dead yet. I will have more scalps. The Black Spirits are waiting for the Black Hoof."

The chief snarled and again raised his foot to stamp on the set face; then laughed hideously, and boasted:

"When the warriors come from Harrodstown you will lick my moccasins like a dog and beg me to kill you. Remember, Black Hoof, who killed white men till his arms ached the day Braddock died, has said it."

With that he turned and stalked back to the fire in the middle of the opening.

Kenton closed his eyes to think. He knew messengers had been sent to Harrodstown and that it was only a matter of hours before he must face the great ordeal. He could only hope that Boone from a distance might do for him as he had done for the poor devil on the sand-spit.

His meditations were interrupted by a commotion near the fire. His guards were erect and staring curiously. As Kenton sought to learn the cause, and was discovering several warriors had just entered the camp, Black Hoof came to his side and held over him a curious club. It was formed from two feet of sapling stem and the roots had been trimmed into a spiked and heavy head. It had been in the water, yet certain dark stains remained. But what caused Kenton's eyes to gleam speculatively were the letters "D. Boon" cut in the handle.

"The Weasel knows the club," declared Black Hoof, holding it closer to Kenton's face.

"He knows it is a good club. It has Shawnee blood on it," was the imperturbable reply.

The chief made to dash the spikes into the prisoner's face, but restrained himself and said:

"It is a talking club." He touched the letters. "What does it mean?"

"It is big medicine of the white man," shortly replied Kenton. "Where was it found?"

"In the Kentucky. What does it mean?"

"It is the Medicine War Club of the white man. It has driven the Red War Club of the Cherokee far down the Tennessee. It has now come to drive the Shawnees from Kentucky. It was floating to the Ohio to show the way Black Hoof's people must go. It means that the Shawnees have put out their fires by listening

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to the evil words of Hamilton the Hair Buyer. Not only will the Shawnees be driven from Kentucky, but they and the Wyandots, and all other Indians who listen to the Crooked Tongue at Detroit, will be driven from the Ohio country."

Trembling with rage Black Hoof spurned the prisoner's head with his foot and then turned away that he might not be tempted to do the man mortal injury and thereby spoil sport. But he took the club with him and examined it moodily, the dark stains worrying him. That a White War Club should battle for supremacy with the Red War Club of the Cherokee was easily believed. And if that, why should it not make war on the Shawnees? To his savage mind the five letters carved on the handle in a moment of idleness were so many mystic symbols. They might be very potent. The prisoner's words instilled uneasiness in the chief's mind.

Left to himself Kenton experienced a tumult of hope and expectancy. Boone had spoken of the club as being in the hollow sycamore. Then the prince of pioneers had returned to the tree and procured the club, and the dark stains and the fact it was found in the river proved Boone had used it on the river bank to the detriment of the Shawnees.

As he arrived at this highly satisfactory summary the camp was disturbed by the abrupt intrusion of a score of Wyandot braves, whose roached crests gave them the appearance of so many angry dogs. At their head walked an Indian of giant physique with a crude representation of a bird of prey painted in red on his massive chest. They pressed forward as though coming on an errand that would permit of no delay.

"Red Feathers, of the Hawk clan of the Wyandots," uneasily murmured Kenton, sharply watching the delegation and noting its air of suppressed excitement as Black Hoof gave greeting.

Kenton knew the Wyandots were thirsting for his immediate torture in return for the scalp he had flaunted on the Boonesborough stockade. As none of their number was at Harrodstown they were not concerned whether the savages besieging that fort were present at the torture or not.

The two chiefs drew aside and talked guardedly at first, Black Hoof essaying to appease and Red Feathers insisting on airing his wrath. At last the Wyandot's voice rose loud and merciless as he demanded:

"The Weasel shall suck no more blood. He must die the many deaths—now."

Black Hoof checked his anger at this peremptory command, and sought to placate his ally, agreeing:

"He shall die as many deaths as the great Wyandot can prepare. The Shawnees only wait for their brothers to come from Harrodstown. Runners were sent to tell them."

"The runners carried something to show the Shawnees at Harrodstown?" hoarsely queried the Wyandot.

"The medicine of Red Feathers is very strong. It gives him the wings of the Hawk to fly high and see all things," said Black Hoof.

"It gave him the Hawk's eye to see this caught on a rock in the Kentucky," thundered the Wyandot.

And to Kenton's amazement he whipped from his breech-clout the prisoner's fur cap and held it out for Black Hoof to inspect.

With a grunt of astonishment the chief turned it over in his hands. It was bedraggled with water. He shot a startled side glance at the war-club. Already his shrewd mind was putting the puzzle together. The finding of the blood-stained club and the cap told him his runners would never reach Harrodstown. Red Feathers announced—

"My warriors are here to prepare him for the torture."

Black Hoof darted him an ominous glance as he heard the insolent proposal, but held himself in restraint as he replied—

"He shall die tonight whether my warriors come from Harrodstown or not."

"The Wyandots' home is the Ohio country," coldly reminded Red Feathers. "The Shawnees and the Delawares were made welcome there. To the Wyandots is given the right to light the council fires between the different tribes. The Shawnee is my younger brother. It is not for him to say when a white man shall die if the elder brother has spoken. Our medicine tells us the Weasel must die now."

BLACK HOOF fell to trembling before he dared trust himself to speak. The Wyandots numbered but a few compared with the bulk of the invading force. The Shawnee chief nursed

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murder in his heart, but his mind had helped encompass the defeat of Braddock, and being above the ordinary plane of savage intelligence he managed to smother his anger while he replied:

"Many of my warriors have returned to Boonesborough, believing the prisoner would be held until tonight. The Weasel will not be put to the torture until tonight. But because the Shawnees love their elder brother they will do this: they will put two to the torture instead of one. I have said it."

"Two?" repeated Red Feathers, glaring about the glade to behold the second victim.

"My young warriors picked up a white woman at Rock Crossing on the Licking and brought her to the Kentucky. I had planned to take her to our village at Chillicothe on the Little Miami to be held for ransom. To please my elder brother she shall be brought here and burned with the Weasel. My warriors can bring her quickly."

Red Feathers either realized his lust for immediate torture would not be gratified, or else was willing to wait for the sake of the second victim. He bowed in acquiescence and strode over to Kenton and feasted his eyes on the outspread form. Kenton was known by many of the Indians, especially among the Shawnees, and Black Hoof with mock politeness went through the ceremony of introducing him to the recently arrived Wyandots, speaking of him to each as though he were an honored guest. As he called each brave by name the warrior advanced and entered into the sport and gave courteous greetings. After they had finished Kenton regretfully remarked:

"The Weasel is sorry one or more Wyandots and at least one Shawnee, besides the two sent as messengers to Harrodstown, can not be here to meet me. Black Hoof must have selected sick men as runners. They must have fallen into the water and drowned. They must have been very weak men, for the Weasel's cap was too heavy for them to carry. Perhaps the cap is bad medicine for all who handle it. Ha! I see a black cloud settling over Red Feathers. It must mean he will soon go and find his warrior who fell into the water. Then they can talk it over among the stars."

Red Feathers squatted on his haunches, devil's fires flickering in his beady eyes, and pressing his painted face close to Kenton's he slowly promised—

"Tonight the Weasel shall bite and swallow pieces of himself."

Kenton spat in his face. With a maniacal howl the Wyandot would have murdered him then and there had not Black Hoof and his warriors pulled him away. For several minutes it required a dozen savages to hold him back, his bestial screams filling the forest.

After he had calmed down sufficiently to promise he would not spoil the evening program he threw himself on the ground and panted as one far spent; and all knew his weakness resulted from his terrible rage. Black Hoof ordered a young brave to lose no time in summoning the party down the river to bring up the white woman.

DESPITE the gathering darkness Kenton by lifting his head could glimpse the limp figure on the other side of the glade. He willingly would have undergone many deaths could this weak bit of humanity be spared. Now he regretted the death of the two messengers. Could they have completed their errand at Harrodstown he alone would have paid the penalty; and that was a man's game in the soft Spring season of 1777.

His physical sufferings would be insignificant compared with what their fiendish ingenuity would inflict upon him through torture of the woman. He knew the woman suspected nothing of her impending fate; for in accordance with their custom of often allaying a captive's fears till confronting him with the horrible truth, the woman had been kindly treated.

Black Hoof himself carried to her a platter of bark containing smoking meat and released her hands that she might eat. Red Feathers, not to be outdone, brought a gourd of water and solicitously examined the thong of twisted hickory-bark about her waist to make sure it was not too tight. The night lengthened and a sprinkle of stars filled the opening in the forest crown. Kenton sought in vain to steel his nerves for the climax.

The two chiefs crossed the opening and Black Hoof softly asked—

"Does the Weasel rest easy?"

"Very easy. I have been sleeping," quietly assured Kenton. "My medicine is in the stars and it watches over me."

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Red Feathers gently raised his head and placed a pillow of moss beneath it, informing:

"The black anger has left the Wyandot's heart. He will ransom his white brother and set him free; then only white belts shall hang between us."

"The Weasel thanks the mighty chief of the Hawk people. When the Weasel is set free and told to go back to his white brothers he will take the Red Feathers' hair along with him," retorted Kenton in a silken voice.

The chiefs looked down into the placid face admiringly.

"He will die good," was Black Hoof's verdict, and knowing it was impossible to create false hopes in the prisoner's mind the two returned to the woman.

Indians now began arriving in large numbers from Boonesborough. Beyond the woman's view warriors collected fuel. Great care was taken not to arouse her fears, and the actual preparation of the two stakes was left till the last. Kenton wondered if his luck had completely deserted him, or if he would find the opportunity of dealing a merciful release to the woman. He hoped for this, and concentrated all his shrewdness to seize some advantage when they came to stand him on his feet.

Now a warrior began trimming two slender trees of their lower branches, and yet the woman suspected nothing. The guards about Kenton were reduced to two, and they were intent on enjoying the spectacle of the woman and her foolish belief she was to suffer no hurt. Something rustled near the back of Kenton's head, but he gave it no heed, thinking a warrior had taken his position there.

Next he experienced a galvanic shock as something pricked his neck. His body stiffened and he held his breath. None of the warriors would experiment with him while the stake was being prepared. Something hard and smooth fell across his wrist and was withdrawn over his clenched hands; then the cord holding the arm outstretched gave way. There came a mighty temptation to flex his tired muscles, but he kept control of himself and waited.

Mingled with his wild exultation was much bewilderment. He knew no one could approach near enough to cut his bonds without being detected instantly. Even if Boone essayed it in the guise of an Indian the two guards close by would notice his presence and at the least glance behind them. They remained with their attention fixed on the woman.

Inasmuch as Kenton was staked out fully fifteen feet from the nearest fringe of undergrowth he knew it was impossible for a rescuer to reach out and sever his bonds. Nevertheless some mysterious agency was at work, for now he felt a knife-blade fumbling with the cord hitched to his left arm. Then came the relaxation and both arms were free.

He waited for the next move of the unseen, taking care not to disturb the position of his arms. The sudden suspicion shot through his mind that this was but a trick of the two chiefs to make him believe he was being rescued; and he vowed mightily that they should pay dear before they again secured his arms.

Slowly a knife began gliding over his forehead and down his nose, the flat surface feeling refreshingly cool, and as it advanced he saw it was fastened to a sapling trimmed into a long, slender pole. Now something heavy was dragging over his features, and with a gulp of understanding he beheld a tomahawk tied loosely to the pole below the knife. The rescue was genuine, and his savior had extended freedom to him by first cutting his arms free, and then providing him with spear and ax.

Black Hoof walked to the woman and stroked her hair and addressed her in gentle words and offered her water, his position preventing her from beholding the final work of arranging the dry fuel 'round the two stakes. Kenton's guards gave themselves over to poorly repressed merriment, and as their indulgence in mirth lessened their perception Kenton, without rising reached down with the knife-pointed pole and cut the thongs holding his legs. Then with a mighty surge of his magnificent muscles his towering bulk came erect, and with two motions he knifed a guard through the neck, turning a chuckle into a death rattle, and brained the other with the ax.

"Get the woman, Dan'l!" he shouted, shaking his ax at the dumfounded savages as though addressing them.

He spoke in English and they did not catch his hurried words and took it for granted he was hurling a defiance at them.

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Then springing forward and recovering his fur cap he snatched up the knob-rooted sapling, and with a derisive gesture yelled—

"Make for the sycamore!"

And now the astounded savages quickened into action.

His purpose was to draw them all after him, for none could know another had cut his bonds. And he backed to the edge of the forest growth and waved his arms defiantly. With an explosion of rage they rushed forward to take him alive. He hurled the war-club, catching Black Hoof in the chest and bowling him over, then plunged to cover with the full pack at his heels.

The forest was black as coal and he was compelled to advance slowly, feeling his way from tree to tree. He paused long enough to unfasten the knife from the pole, then hurled the pole from him to advertise his location and make sure of a general pursuit.

But if he needs must move slowly his pursuers suffered from a similar handicap. He could tell by their signal-calls that they were extending in a long line, purposing to surround him. He had no notion of being driven from the river, however.

If it were Boone who had rescued him—and he could conceive of no other possessing the temerity, let alone having the opportunity—then Boone would surely take advantage of the savages' impulsive pursuit to rescue the woman. It followed that the pioneer would need aid once he gained the river and endeavored to take the woman to the fort. So instead of striking off and leaving his pursuers to grope about in the darkness Kenton doubled back to steal through the line and pass behind it to the Kentucky.

Red Feathers had remembered the woman and feared lest she effect her escape, for only the hickory-bark 'round her waist and a tree held her prisoner. While the others pressed on to recapture the white man the Wyandot chief turned back to the camp. He reached the glade just as Kenton was leaving it, after satisfying himself the woman was gone. The meeting between the two was entirely unexpected by both; yet in a second they were at death grips, neither having time to use ax or knife.

"Let the Weasel's medicine save him now," hissed the chief as they swayed back and forth in the half light of the dying fire.

"It sent me back after Red Feathers' hair," gritted Kenton, shifting his hold and exerting all his wonderful strength.

With a buck and a boost he sent his adversary over his head and wheeled like a cat and leaped upon him.

THE stars were paling as Kenton struck into the bushes surrounding the big sycamore. He looked back and beheld dark forms streaming into the opening. The discovery halloo warned him he had been seen. His decision was instantly made. He must draw the pack away from the sycamore; but before he could break cover Boone was crawling from the hollow tree, and directing.

"Git in there with the woman! I must make the fort an' stop their tunnelin'. They seen one man enter this patch! They don't know 'bout the holler. Duck down an' do it quick!"

Kenton mechanically obeyed and crawled into the hiding-place. Once the Indians saw a man break from the bushes and streak along the river bank they took it for granted it was Kenton, although they marveled at his fresh burst of speed.

To reach the stockade, except at night and by stealth, would have been almost impossible; but the Shawnees had withdrawn to witness the death of Kenton, and few if any savages were between the pioneer and the high fence. The cries and shots had aroused the garrison, already alarmed over his absence, and when he appeared running down the slope to the river the rear stockade was lined with expert riflemen ready to cover his flight. Three Indians went down at the first volley and Boone took the river in a head-dive and swam under water till in mid-stream. To gain the bank and climb over the barrier was the work of two minutes.

Immediately the fort was invested, the infuriated savages keeping up a continual firing on all sides. Boone recovered his wind and then said:

"Fetch me a rifle. An' Billin's an' Gutherie come with me. Rest of ye do as usual."

Two famous rifle-shots followed him to the second story of the cabin nearest the blasted oak. Pointing to it and the

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muddy ribbon of water again feeding into the current he explained:

"They're tunnelin' ag'in. Ye can jest make out a leetle blaze on the bark near the foot of th' oak. Jest below that blaze is a keg of gunpowder. Part of the top's ripped off an' a ax-head is half buried in it. The powder's plumb on top of the tunnel. Ye must find the ax-head with yer bullet to git a spark. 'Bout one spark'll be 'nough. Now, shoot!"

They fired, one after the other; then Boone fired. Nothing happened. Derisive yells came from the bank, the Indians believing the shots were meant to drive them away.

"Reckon it's a matter o' luck!" growled Billings, aiming carefully.

A deafening explosion proclaimed the luck was with him. The watchers glimpsed the oak tossed high in the air; then after the last dust débris had sifted down Boone smiled broadly. The brow of the bank had vanished, dropping into the tunnel and putting a stop to the mining venture. Those savages not buried in the tunnel were wildly fleeing down the river bank, or plunging into the water, their departure being hastened by the sharpshooters.

"We found that dressed deer ye heaved over the fence," said Gutherie as he reloaded his rifle.

"Stand ready to help fetch in somethin' else tonight," said Boone. "Kenton an' a woman's hid up out there. Kenton 'n' me has been derned busy the last twenty-four hours."

That night half a dozen veterans sallied out through the front gate and precipitated a blind engagement with the lurking foe. As they slowly slipped back through the darkness and passed through the gate each gave his name to the sentinel keeping tally.

"All in but Gutherie, an' here they come in a bunch!" yelled the sentinel.

And as he made to close the gate Billings flung it open and Gutherie, sorely wounded, fell inside the fence. A ripple of rifle fire drove the charging foe back to cover.

"Well, that's done for," announced a dearly beloved voice, and Boone once more stood among them. "Mighty good work, boys. Made it fine for me 'n' Kenton to fetch in that poor woman. Now every man stick to his post. Kenton 'n' me is goin' to take 'vantage of them cusses bein' upsot, an' go on that leetle huntin'-trip we've been talkin' 'bout. Don't look for us for three nights from now. Come, Simon."

II

THE Indians knew they had been tricked in some fashion by the sortie from the front of the Boonesborough stockade. This conviction led them to believe the garrison would rest on its laurels and remain strictly on the defensive for the remainder of the night; and having lost several warriors in the sally, and having the death of Red Feathers, the Wyandot chief, to mourn, there was a general withdrawal to the depths of the forest, with only a fringe of guards left 'round the fort.

"It'll be easier to git away this time, Simon," shrewdly deduced Boone as he and Kenton climbed over the fence on the river side.

"But if we run into them down-stream there won't be any getting away, Dan'l," warned Kenton. "They're so boiling mad they'll have our hair off in a jiffy."

"We won't go down-stream," whispered Boone. "We'll go up-stream toward Cantuck Ridge. Plenty of elk an' deer there. Then ag'in I want to look 'round for Cherokee signs. Jack Sevier sent me word more'n six weeks ago that the Cherokee are actin' suspicious. He thinks they'll come to Cantuck to fight us because the shamans are tellin' 'em they'll sure win if they j'in hands with the Shawnees an' Wyandots. But I think Jack's mistook. Unlita (the Breath) is wise as a fox. He figgers to let the Shawnees do the fightin' here an' wipe us out of Cantuck. Then the Cherokees will j'in hands with the Northern Injuns in raidin' the Watauga settlements; an' if the Injuns win out, Unlita figgers the Cherokees will be the bosses of all this country."

"The Breath is afraid the Shawnees have never forgiven the Cherokees for driving them from Kentucky," agreed Kenton. "I reckon 'Nolichucky Jack' has guessed wrong. But there's no harm in looking 'round for signs."

Ordinarily Kenton's bold spirit would have preferred paying a return visit to the Shawnees and their ferocious allies, the Wyandots, to a hunting-trip. He realized, however, the fort's dire need of food and willingly fell in behind his companion,

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satisfied with knowing there would be fighting a-plenty before the dark shadow was lifted from Kentucky. The course was along the river and aimed to penetrate the besieging circle of redskins at its weakest point. Had they proceeded westward they needs must have cut the periphery of the circle surrounding Boonesborough as well as that encompassing Harrodstown. Toward the north they would have been endangered constantly by the war-parties continually pouring in from beyond the Ohio.

Both realized the importance of breaking through the red line before dawn and no further time was wasted in conversation. When Boone sank to his knees, with hand stretched out behind him, Kenton automatically followed his example. Once Kenton touched the pioneer's shoulder as a signal for him to halt. For several minutes they remained motionless; then Kenton ventured to whisper—

"Sure something is following us."

Boone had heard nothing but he knew his friend's almost miraculous woods sense, and accepted the suspicion as a fact. As no alarm had been given he reasoned that not more than one or two warriors could be behind them, and that these were impelled to investigate by curiosity rather than because of any belief a white man was abroad. Placing his lips to Kenton's ear he directed:

"Go ahead. Keep along the bank."

Kenton slipped away and Boone crouched at the foot of a black walnut and waited. The murmur of the river was innocently punctuated by the splash of some waterfolk, and birds rustled drowsily in the growth behind him. None of these sounds attracted his attention. If he heard them he classified and dismissed them subconsciously. Finally there came a faint, thin crackling of a dry twig.

Placing his long rifle aside he drew his ax; shortly the sound was repeated within a few rods of him. Having acquired the Indian trick of placing his moccasins without making a sound, a knack that called almost for a sixth sense and depended on the ability to withdraw the foot the instant it touched dry leaf or branch and before an alarm could be given, Boone smiled in relief. The two careless footfalls told him that the warrior approaching was proceeding carelessly and in ignorance of the white men ahead.

"Jest opines he's got the river all to hisself," mused Boone, gathering his heels under him.

The night was black and under the walnut it was impossible to see anything. Suddenly Boone sensed some one standing close by and held his breath. In another moment he knew the savage had discovered his presence through some instinctive quality of mind. Ever so slowly the pioneer raised his ax. Although holding the ambush he was at a disadvantage. He must halt the warrior, he must prevent him from giving any alarm. To strike and kill but permit the body to fall into the river, or thresh about in the undergrowth, would be a tactical error. So standing erect he softly asked in the Shawnee tongue—

"Who is my brother?"

The query brought a faint rustle, as though the unseen had stepped to one side. Boone instantly shifted his own position. There came a savage grunt and the whir of an ax, and a dull thud as the iron struck the trunk of the walnut. Boone sprang forward, striking a short-armed blow, and missing entirely; but his groping left hand landed on a throat. Stifling the yell of discovery he struck again, and this time was rewarded by the crunch of flesh and bone, and the clawing figure went limp. Dropping his ax he eased the body to the ground.

"Might 'a' know'd he'd smell me, him standin' so close," he told himself.

Satisfied the encounter had not advertised itself to other warriors he examined the few yards between the river trail and the water and found it comparatively clear of undergrowth. Lifting the limp form in his arms he carried it to the bank and gently slipped it into the current. Then recovering his rifle he followed after Kenton and soon came up with him.

"Had a tussle, Dan'l?" enviously murmured Kenton.

"My Shawnee lingo didn't work," replied Boone. "We was standin' too close. Reckon he smelled the fort smell on me. Somethin' like that. I let him float down the river. When they find him they'll figger he was killed durin' the fuss outside the front gate tonight."

"Maybe so," growled Kenton, staring wistfully toward the rear as though wishing other redskins might force their company upon him and his friend. "It'll be hard

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work to fetch back meat if a parcel of them get to dogging us."

Nothing untoward happened for the rest of the night, and making the best speed possible the two covered a score of miles before dawn drove them to cover. Boone cut some heavy cudgels and demonstrated his cunning in throwing them by knocking over a wild turkey which was hastily broiled over a handful of fire in a deep hollow. This morning meal revealed to Boone the loss of his pouch containing his flint and steel, and the discovery irritated and worried him. But Kenton viewed it lightly, insisting there wasn't a chance in ten thousand of an Indian finding it.

"And if one does he'll have no way of knowing when it was lost, or who lost it," he consoled.

"He'd know who it belonged to," grumbled Boone. "There's a big turtle in beads worked on it. I was a fool to finnify it up like that, but ever since the Shawnees got to callin' me Big Turtle I got thinkin' it was my name. But it's gone an' we'll forget it.

"Now this is my notion of what we should do: 'bout ten miles from here is a cave I used to stay in. That was afore I cut the Wilderness Trace. Prob'ly I'm the only man that's been in it for years an' years. Injuns don't fancy caves except to lay their dead in. First time I went into it I got a bad skeer. Some Chickasaws was botherin' me an' I stumbled on to the place by accident. When I got inside an' struck a tiny light to see where I was I found a print of a moccasin in the dust. An' there wasn't any trail leadin' out. Trouble was I didn't know whether it was a fresh track, or had been made fifty years back. So I stuck as quiet as a skeered rabbit near the openin' till sure the Chickasaws was gone."

He paused abruptly and Kenton, much exasperated, demanded—

"What kind of a way is that, Dan'l, to tell a story? Get along."

"Oh, it wasn't nothin' but a mummy waitin' for me," continued Boone with a dry chuckle. "Critter had been dead a long time. Hurt in a fight an' got in there to die in peace. The air's so dry an' pure he'd jest shriveled up. Wish we had a b'ilin' kettle an' dared risk a fire. We'd make some salt an' put down a lot of meat."

"If we had a ton we couldn't take back only what we can tote," reminded Kenton.

"I was thinkin' of makin' a raft an' floatin' down a reg'lar cargo," explained Boone.

THIS suggestion appealed strongly to the young borderer. The night trip down the river was sure to bring many adventures. Boone cut his enthusiastic eulogy short by requesting him to climb a lofty elm and survey the country. This was quickly done, and on descending Kenton reported he could find no hostile signs and declared his belief they were far removed from any Indians, and that there was nothing to hinder their immediate advance to the cave.

The approach to the cave, however, was as cautiously conducted as though the forest were filled with savages, and it was midday before they came to a halt in a little ravine back of a ridge that extended parallel with the stream. Pointing to a patch of laurel some fifty feet up the slope Boone informed—

"The openin's jest behind that. There's a leetle shelf 'bout a dozen foot square what we can't see from here."

The ascent of the slope was made with the utmost cunning. No stone was dislodged, no ground bush disturbed, no impression left on the occasional patches of moss. Once they were behind the screen of laurel they were satisfied that no savage could detect a trace of their having mounted the rocks. Boone made a torch of moss wrapped 'round a dry branch, and borrowing Kenton's steel and flint, struck a light just inside the opening. After crawling a few feet they were able to stand erect. The apartment was some sixty feet in diameter, the floor sloping down to a second opening which Boone informed led into the second chamber.

"There's a whole nest of rooms behind it," continued Boone. "I've been into half a dozen of 'em tryin' to find a back door. Always opined I might be cooped up here some time, an' a back door would come mighty handy."

"Think of finding tracks you made ten years ago!" exclaimed Kenton as his sharp gaze swept the rocky floor. "And you was wearing a moccasin you'd patched in a hurry."

"Left foot," admitted Boone admiringly.

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"That set over near the wall, sort of alone by themselves, is the trail of the poor cuss who come here to die. Somehow I didn't feel like disturbin' 'em. An' there they be, jest as they'll be when the last trump sounds. I opine that redskin will be surprised to be able to foller his own trail out when the last day comes. All these others is mine, of course——"

The rhetorical effect of his abrupt halt brought Kenton keenly to attention, and through the smoky flare of the torch he stared questioningly at his friend. Boone's brows were puckered in a frown. Gradually his blue eyes half closed, and he glanced swiftly toward the opening.

"Well?" prompted Kenton, unconsciously dropping his right hand to his belt.

"Trouble is some of these tracks ain't mine," slowly explained Boone. "Some of them is fresh. They're on top of mine. I never wore moccasins sewed like that." And gingerly kneeling he traced a circle with his finger in the dust around an imprint. "An' here's another, an' another! Look! Here's a second set! Both made on top of mine. Two warriors come in, one 'hind t'other, an' walked straight into the second cave."

"I've got them!" said Kenton. "Here's where they came out, skirting the left-hand wall. Well, they're gone; that's one blessing."

Boone lowered the torch and finally decided—

"Shawnee moccasins! Now why did two come in an' go right out?"

Kenton pointed to the second chamber, saying—

"The answer may be in there."

Boone swung the torch till it burst into a brilliant flame and ran to the entrance of the adjoining cave. Advancing to a niche formed by a lip of overhanging rock he held the light over a stark body, and announced:

"The mummy Injun. I opine they caught sight of him an' got skeered an' went out without stickin' 'round any."

"Their trail didn't show any signs of being in a hustle. ——! Look here, Dan'l!"

Boone gave closer attention and his jaw fell as Kenton tore aside the blanket. In place of the mummy that had been his companion in the years past he was staring at the corpse of a red man recently killed. Near the occiput was a terrible wound.

"He never budged after getting that," muttered Kenton.

"Killed outside. The two warriors fetched him here. Must 'a' dumped the mummy in one of the back caves. Put the mummy's blanket 'round this feller." He bent closer, then hoarsely whispered, "Cherokee!"

And grinding the torch into the rock he softly stamped upon it until no spark remained.

"Shawnee moccasins and a dead Cherokee," mumbled Kenton.

"Killed within a day or so," said Boone, feeling his way to the first cave. "Plain as a beaver's tail! Either the shamans or the Breath sent this Injun up here to do some scoutin'. Some young Shawnee bucks run afoul of him an' couldn't hold back from killin' him. But their chiefs had agreed with the Breath to bury the hatchet an' patch up a peace; so it wouldn't do to have the dead Cherokee found. The Shawnees are tryin' mighty hard to git the Breath to j'in 'em. But, Lawd, they can't ever forgit or forgive bein' bundled out of Cantuck by the Cherokees!"

As they gained the exit Kenton pressed Boone's arm for silence and crept through the opening. Boone followed and the two remained prostrate behind the laurel growth. Parting the bushes they gazed into the ravine and beheld two Indians standing waist deep in the bushes, their heads tilted back in a peculiar fashion.

Kenton wrinkled his nose and gave a pantomime of sniffing. Boone nodded to show he understood. The two warriors in passing down the ravine had caught the faint reek of wood smoke and were seeking to learn its origin.

"Our torch," softly whispered Boone. "Think of the critters gittin' a whiff of that!"

Kenton fingered his rifle longingly but Boone restrained the impulse by pressing his hand.

"Only two," protested Kenton, glancing at Boone's rifle.

BOONE shook his head. No adventure could distract him from his main purpose—the procuring of meat for the garrison. The Shawnees, on the edge of death, continued casting about

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for a solution of the mystery. That their nostrils had registered the almost imperceptible scent of smoke spoke eloquently for their animal senses. That they would not rest content until they found the fire that made the smoke was patent to the hidden observers.

In elevating their gaze to scan the skyline the screen of laurel for a moment was brought within their ken. The horizons giving no clues they reverted to the task which had held them when the sniff of burning wood had thrown them off their stride; this consisted of a minute examination of the ground. Finally they began casting about in circles like hounds.

"Follered us!" grunted Boone in disgust.

"Notice the tall one," murmured Kenton. "Thought he looked familiar. He's the smartest trailer in the Shawnee nation. He wears black feathers in his hair. He's Black Loon, of the Loon Clan. Boasts he can trail an eagle through the air. He's on the way to be a big medicine-man, or a prophet, if he ain't nipped in the bud. Black Hoof, their war chief, is a child compared to him, so far as brains go. He's smart's a steel trap.

"Oh, I know him. Met him at Girty's Town year ago. I was quitting the place on the jump, with the whole tribe at my heels, and he was returning from the hunt. I just had time to get him across the head with my knife, taking off the top of his ear. See, he wears his hair long on that side to cover it up. Reckon he's made a heap of medicine to get me. And I limped for four months from the jab he gave me in the leg. He'll pick up a trace where any other Injun can't find anything."

Boone nodded and watched the two closely. He, also, had heard marvelous stories about the Loon's uncanny knack of following a hidden trail. He did not believe the Loon would bother with a trail unless he deemed it important, and this led him to the conclusion that the two had been following his and Kenton's steps since early morning, doubtless picking up the signs at a considerable distance from the fort.

"That's the idee," he finally told himself. "They've been rampagin' 'round somewhere an' was makin' for Boonesborough an' happened to cut our trail, an' turned an' follered us. Wonder what they've been up to so far from the fightin'?"

Suddenly he remembered his missing pouch, and reddened angrily.

"If that dad-burned pouch set 'em on to us——" he commenced grumbling when Kenton hissed for him to be silent and began working his rifle forward.

Boone could discover nothing to arouse his friend's apprehension. The savages were standing and conversing, the Loon tossing bits of grass in the air to test the slight breeze. As Boone placed his hand over the priming of Kenton's rifle the Indians bounded into the bush and made off down the ravine.

"What made ye think something was up?" asked Boone.

"What made you stop me dropping that red skunk?" growled Kenton. "They've guessed we're here. Didn't you see how queer the Loon acted for about a second? It was only a flash, but I'm plumb sure he found a sign showing we'd quit the ravine for these rocks. He was kneeling, and for an instant remained like a stone image. Then he called to the other and jumped to his feet. He's probably gone to get help."

"Then we must quit this place," sighed Boone. "A few miles up the ravine is a hole formed by a landslide. Nothing better'n a bear's den, but it'll give us shelter. It'll do all right if we can manage to quit here without leavin' a sign."

"I'm for leaving boldly and laying an ambush. Then if they come along we'll drop them."

"Won't do; the fort needs meat," patiently reminded Boone. "We ain't here to fight. They're watching this way this minute. They'll dog us unseen to the new place, and that'll end our huntin'. We can't leave here till dark. Better go inside an' hunt for that back door."

With a grumbled protest Kenton backed after Boone into the cave and helped find the discarded torch; but they did not light it till they had felt their way into the second chamber and stood beside the dead warrior. Turning 'round a shoulder of rock at the head of the natural bier they entered a narrow passageway and came upon the mummy tumbled on the floor. Stepping over this they entered an apartment nearly circular in form and having various egresses into other caverns. Boone identified all but two as having been previously explored by him and added that they led to nowhere. Selecting one of the remaining they pressed

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on and found themselves following a long corridor.

"This is all new to me," said Boone. "Here's another cave."

With a low whistle of delight Kenton exclaimed—

"I can make out the farther side, and the light of the torch don't throw that far."

"Then it's daylight!" rejoiced Boone. "Daylight sure's preachin'!"

A hurried advance and they had discovered the "back door."

To their surprise they found themselves on practically a level with the first cave and gazing down from the small opening into the ravine. It was obvious that the long corridor extended parallel with the ravine. Near the opening a stunted mountain growth began its tangled thicket, reaching to the bottom of the ravine. Throwing themselves prostrate they wormed their way over a dozen feet of open ledge and into cover. As they rolled in under the first boughs Dan'l brushed at his face; then whispered:

"I reckon I know what the Loon found, Simon. A spider's web. I jest brushed one from my face. I remember doin' the same ornery trick when we was makin' up the slope. He found that busted spider's web."

"Mighty careless of you, Dan'l," reproached Kenton. "They'll come back with their friends and visit the cave. Finding we ain't there they'll quit. Then we can go back and take it easy."

"There'll be no takin' it easy s'long as the fort is waitin' for meat," reminded Boone.

The crevice, which Boone styled the "bear's den," was soon reached and was found to be cluttered with bones. Boone pronounced these to be signs of a panther rather than a bear, and decided they had weathered at least one snow. Raking the dead leaves into a couch, the two flung themselves down and snatched two hours of sleep, waking on the minute agreed upon with the precision of the woods-trained. Satisfied that the firing of their rifles would not be heard by any Shawnees about the cave they threw caution to the winds, and coming upon several deer, shot four with as many bullets. Kenton stood guard while Boone hastily cut up the carcasses. They were not disturbed.

Boone was jubilant and repeatedly dwelt upon his scheme for rafting the venison down the river. He knew of a break in the ridge, within a mile of where they stood, through which they could easily gain the river, and decided—

"We'll tote what we can to the river and find some timbers left by high water. Two logs with a few stringers will do the trick. Go as far as we can durin' the night; then hide up till the next night."

"What a chance to sneak back to the cave and meet up with the Loon," grinned Kenton, his eyes dancing like a mischievous schoolboy's. "I'm sure they're nosing 'round that place."

"The fort's waitin' to eat," sternly retorted Boone, loading the meat on his powerful back.

Kenton looked glum but piled an immense load on his mighty shoulders and motioned for Boone to lead the way.

The sun baked them, the flies hovered over them in clouds, but they doggedly held their pace, reckless of everything except getting their burdens to the river. The sun was low in the west when they entered a cool grove and sighted the water through the fresh, young leaves. Discarding their loads they took turns in drinking, one standing back in the bush and keeping watch while the other abandoned himself to the luxury of the water.

"Now that's over let's find some raft stuff," gasped Boone.

This was easily done, as the last high water had littered the bank with broken tree trunks. Selecting two medium-sized timbers they began removing the branches with their hunting-knives, not daring to risk the sound of hatchet blows. Boone paused in his labor as the first timber was being completed, and briefly announced:

"We're wastin' time, Simon. I hate to hurt yer feelin's, but ye jest stick to yer stent an' I'll go back an' git another load for a second raft——"

"No, siree! Not by a hanged sight!" hotly broke in Kenton.

"Simon, I'm over forty. Ye're twenty-one. Ye're a good boy. Finish this raft, load it an' start for the fort. If ye make it ye can come back an' meet me. In the daytime ye'll find me hid under the bank, this side, prob'ly. At night ye'll take yer chances of spottin' me as I slip downstream. The folks at the fort are mighty keen set for some fresh meat, I opine."

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"Why can't you go and let me load the second raft and——"

"Simon! Simon! I have spoken," cut in Boone, unconsciously adopting the Indian style of avowal.

And to show he had no further interest in what had threatened to become an argument he picked up his rifle and started over the back trail. For fully a minute Kenton glared after him wrathfully. Then with a wry smile he surrendered and turned to finish the raft. On all the border there was no other who would have treated him thus. And, somehow, he rather took pride in acknowledging the fact to himself.

UP IN Detroit the British lieutenant-governor of the Northwest, Henry Hamilton, was waiting for his plan to mature. It was a shrewd plan and of great military value. Did it attain a successful climax, the Colonies would be cut in two and the entire interior of the continent left in control of the British, while the seaboard continued fighting for its life. If the Indians could smash through Kentucky they would find the Cherokees ready to hold the southern end of the line in a terrific drive on the Virginia and Carolinas frontiers.

Boone, typing the splendid spirit that made Kentucky possible, mulled over the situation as he strode back to where he had butchered the deer. Theoretically, Kentucky could not hold the line. The Shawnees and Wyandots were besieging all the fortified posts south of the Kentucky River, having already cleared out the defenses north of the river. Any day might find British regulars with their cannon and companies of Canadians coming to re-enforce the savages.

Because of the brutal treatment the Cherokees had experienced at the hands of the settlers they were ever inclined to join hands with the British. Boone had had much dealing with the Nation and fully understood the wrongs rankling in their hearts. He knew the time had come for the Tennessee towns to take an ample revenge. He believed they would hold back until the Northern Indians could join them, after sweeping over the ashes of Kentucky, and present an unbroken front.

Nolichucky Jack Sevier was more pessimistic and looked for a Cherokee invasion of Kentucky before the leaves fell. Boone fought this possibility from his mind, repeatedly telling himself that Unlita, the Breath, would remain firm in his distrust of the Ohio Indians, and would not be swayed by his shamans to strike before he had planned. Regardless of what the Breath would do, it was an obvious fact, even to border children, that once the white wedge, constituted by the Kentucky settlements, was obliterated the full impact of the red tide would sweep up to the Blue Ridge, and, probably, beyond it to engulf the Piedmont belt of Virginia.

"Why, Cantuck has jest got to stand stout," mumbled Boone. "George Rogers Clark is right: if Harrodstown an' Boonesborough go under, then Logan's must fall, an' it'll be free an' open footin' for the reds down the Wilderness Trace an' through the Gap. But we'll hold. Jest 'cause we've got to. Lord, see to it we can take 'em in piecemeal. For if the Cherokees jump on our backs——But they won't. Injuns never drive well in harness, let old Hamilton offer any pay he wants to."

This mental attitude stamped him a greater man than Kenton, although the latter while scarcely more than a boy in years indulged in splendidly courageous acts that carried his name from tidewater to the Mississippi. Kenton ever lusted for the adventure at hand, gleefully accepting tremendous odds to prove his sportsmanship. Boone, none the less equipped with pure courage, kept one objective before his mind—home-building. And home-building in such times as these, when the whole country was being stalked by starvation, hinged on the problem of food. To hold the line the forts must have meat.

It was deep dusk when the pioneer returned to the remainder of the venison hanging from an oak tree. He planned to bag more game on the morrow and start the second raft of meat under cover of darkness. One of the two rafts, twenty-four hours apart, ought to get through. Now he had started the impulsive and reckless Kenton down-river he was free to investigate more fully the matter of the dead Cherokee. Nolichucky Jack's warning buzzed in his ears each time he recalled the dead warrior.

Were the Southern Indians about to invade Kentucky in force, or was the murdered warrior a lone scout, or possibly a messenger? He had insisted to his fellows

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back in Boonesborough that the Cherokees would be restrained by a double check; their disinclination to put their forces into the field until after the Shawnees, their ancient friends and enemies, were well blooded; and their fear of leaving their towns exposed to a possible flank attack from the Watauga settlements.

But all such arguments were beside the bush now. The dead warrior raised an ominous question. The fact that his body was concealed showed he was killed by the Shawnees, blinded by their ancient enmity, but who in a soberer moment sought to avert any risk of antagonizing the Cherokees. This would betoken an expectation on the part of the Ohio Indians of receiving help from the south.

Cutting several slices from the suspended venison Boone retired to a dense thicket and lighted a tiny fire between two rocks and made a pretense of broiling the meat. Bolting a portion of it he stowed the rest in his hunting shirt and stole down the ravine.

He found no signs of Indians. Passing the cave he sacrificed some of his natural caution for speed and pressed on until a sag in the ridge permitted an easy passing to the river. He was some miles above the point where Kenton at this moment should be navigating his precious craft down the river. He continued up-stream to satisfy himself no Indians were in that neighborhood. He had covered several miles and was on the point of turning back, reassured in spirit, when he reached a deeply wooded bend in the river and rounded it to find all his fears realized in the new vista. Several fires were twinkling along the opposite shore.

"Lawd! I hope they're Shawnees!" he muttered.

Above the bend the stream narrowed rapidly and by the time he had gained a point opposite the encampment he felt he was too close for safety. Crawling to the edge of the water he parted the rank grass and stared anxiously at the little opening. The fires brilliantly lighted the scene and his first glance took in a tall figure seated with back to a tree, the erect black feathers in his scalp-lock identifying him as the Black Loon, the follower of invisible trails. Boone's anxiety lessened. They must be Shawnees, detailed to harass any possible reinforcements coming down the Wilderness Road. The next glance jolted him to the verge of a panic. The Loon was the only Shawnee present. All the others were Cherokees.

As Boone glared the Loon rose and began:

"Oh, Unlita; you sent a peace talk to the Shawnees. You sent white belts to Hamilton at Detroit. You have said you would join your ancient brothers in a war on the white man. You took your peace talk from your bag and told us the hatchet between us is buried deep underground, so deep that the roots of the tallest tree can not find it. Now you say you can not help us strike the white men in the head until the Wyandots go back beyond the Ohio and the redcoats come from Detroit.

"My brother, the Breath, I am the mouth of the Shawnee Nation. I tell you the Wyandots are good Indians. Little birds have whispered bad talk in the ears of Unlita. They have told him the Wyandots want Kentucky. It is false. The Wyandots, nor the Shawnees, want any of this country except to hunt in. Once the Wyandots pick up the chain of friendship with the Cherokees they will never let it fall to the ground.

"Drive away the evil birds. They are night-goers (witches). Set sharp stakes and catch them. The Wyandots love the Ohio country and have asked the Shawnees to come and live with them. The Wyandots also took the Delawares in and warmed them and fed them. If they were hungry for land, would they open their country to other nations?

"Join with us now in driving the whites back to the stinking-water and no bad Indians will come to trouble you. Kentucky shall be a hunting-ground for all the tribes that bury the hatchet; and we will give belts to stop our foolish young men from fighting your young men when they meet here to hunt. There is room enough for all Indians, game enough for us all. It is the white man who eats up the land and drives the game away.

"I am sent to meet you here and talk to you for the Shawnees, the Wyandots and for Hamilton at Detroit. If you find my talk good others are waiting to come and bring belts to make our friendship so strong it will last as long as the mountains stand.

"You sent a belt-bearer to us to say you would join us against the whites if the

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Wyandots went back home, and if redcoats came from Detroit. My brothers, the redcoats are coming when the leaves turn red. Brothers, I have something to tell you. Your belt-bearer delivered his message and went about and saw how our fight against Harrodstown and Boonesborough was going. Then we gave him presents and he started back to meet you here. Brothers, your young warrior has been found dead in the river, and if you would cover his body you will help strike the ax into Boonesborough."

THE circle of Cherokees stirred uneasily, and only Indian etiquette prevented their crying out at hearing such news. After a slight pause, during which he was the focus for every pair of savage eyes, the Black Loon threw back his head and loudly continued—

"In the dead hand of your young warrior was found this."

And to Boone's amazement he whipped from his girdle and held aloft a pouch of deerskin, the same the pioneer had lost from his belt the night before. With dramatic bruskness the Loon tossed the pouch at the feet of a Cherokee in the first row, and said:

"There are beads upon it and they give the totem of the Big Turtle. It was torn from the belt of Big Turtle, who holds the fort at Boonesborough."

This time the rage of the Cherokees could not be entirely restrained, and an angry murmur ran 'round the table. The warrior receiving the pouch rose and demanded—

"How are the Cherokees to know the dead warrior is Uskwalena, our messenger?"

The Loon picked up a bundle wrapped in deerskin and opening it held up a paint-bag and a girdle fashioned from hickory bark."

"These were taken from the dead warrior's body that you might see them, O Unlita."

The Breath advanced a few steps and examined them briefly; then curtly said—

"They were worn by Uskwalena. Uskwalena is dead."

"Big-Head is dead and buried by his friends, the Shawnees and the Wyandots. The Cherokees shall be led to his grave and his body shall be carried back to the Tennessee. But you would not know your brother, Unlita, except by these, for he was in the water several sleeps. But he is dead and his slayer, Big Turtle, lives and laughs at you from behind his stout logs at Boonesborough."

"The thunderin' red liar!" gasped Boone, now fully understanding the subtlety of the Loon's purpose. "He kills Big-Head an' hides him in the cave an' when they find their own brave dead with my pouch in his hand they go to the cave an' git the Cherokee's belt an' paint-bag an' let on they took it from the cuss they fished from the river! The Loon was makin' for the cave to git the belt an' bag when we see him in the ravine. Dern his pelt!"

For the fraction of a minute Black Loon's lease of life hung by a slim thread. But again Boone held his rage in control, whereas Kenton probably would have sent the Loon after his victim.

The situation was tremendous in its potentials. If the Cherokees were convinced their messenger had been slain by Boone or by any of his men they would waive their objections and join at once in the war against Kentucky. As a *casus belli* Big-Head's death was all-sufficient. Some of the most bitterly fought intertribal wars had their origin in trifles, such as the Delawares' bloody conflict emanating from two children quarreling over a grasshopper.

The Breath faced his warriors and said something Boone could not catch. But he understood it when the warriors, as one, raised their eyes high above their heads. The taut form of the Loon relaxed. The Breath turned to him with great dignity, and announced:

"The Cherokee Nation knows how to measure out blood against blood. Let my brother go back to his people and tell them to send belts now. Tell our brothers, the Wyandots, the Cherokees will listen no more to the talk of night-goers, but will give them white wampum for white wampum, and a belt showing one dish. For four days we shall stay here."

The Loon bowed and picking up his weapons vanished through the black background of the forest; and Boone knew Kentucky faced its supreme crisis. Four days would pass before the Cherokees took the war-path; for the warriors must first "go to water" for four consecutive nights.

But when Boone beheld the warriors collecting in groups of eight he groaned—

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"Only three days! They're startin' in now! They gain a night an' Boonesborough loses twenty-four hours!"

He would have edged away, spurred on by the necesssity of warning the fort and the sending of an express to Harrodstown and Logan's, but before he could retreat the savages commenced fording the stream on both sides of his hiding-place. For a bit he feared his presence had been discovered, then remembered the warriors must face the east, the abode of the all-powerful Red Spirits, in going to water. To take the required position they must cross to his bank.

Hemmed in the pioneer could do nothing but lie prone on the grass and mud and hope he should not be discovered. On each side stood a group of eight men, other groups ranged along the bank beyond these, and shamans were making ready to recite the sacred formula for each band. Unlike many of their formulas, with which Boone was familiar, no beads were used, the warriors contenting themselves with standing on the bank and looking down on Yunwi Gunahita, or the "Long Person," as the river was ceremonially styled.

"*Hayi! Yu!*" commenced the shamans in chorus. "Listen! Now instantly we have lifted up the Red War Club! Quickly his (the enemy's) soul shall be without motion. There under the earth where the Black War Clubs shall be moving about like ball-sticks in the game, there his soul shall be, never to reappear. We cause it to be so. There under the earth the Black War Club and the Black Fog have come together as one for their (the enemy's) covering. The Black Fog shall never move from them. We cause it to be so."

This portion of the formula, addressed to the white settlers and consigning them to the abode of eternal darkness, was followed by a slight pause before the shamans undertook to complete the ceremony by reciting the other portion, devoted to imploring good fortune for the Cherokees. Just as the shamans were about to resume, the edge of the bank, where Boone was concealed, began sinking; and rather than to take a plunge into the water, where the light from the fires would at once reveal him, Boone frantically jumped backward. What noise he made was smothered by the splash of the bank in the river; and the warriors' confusion permitted him to withdraw deeper into cover.

Expecting instant pursuit he was rejoiced to hear a shaman loudly proclaiming that the spell was broken for the night and that the formula would be recited for the first time on the following night.

"Yunwi Gunahita is displeased," said the shaman. "The Long Person gives us a sign our medicine is weak and that we must wait. The Long Person wills it to be so."

Having learned all he could Boone stole back toward the ravine, his mind concentrated on the all-important problem of warding off the impending attack of the Cherokees. The conveying of more meat to the garrison was now a trifling matter. The all-important thing was to prevent a consummation of the proposed alliance. He knew the Shawnees and the Wyandots would not lose an hour in sending belts to bind the Cherokees to the new war pact.

On the fourth night the warriors would bathe in the stream and each would receive from a shaman a small piece of charmed root to chew, which would make him invulnerable. After the fourth and last visit to the water there was no power that Boone knew of which could hold the Cherokee hordes from ravaging Kentucky.

Well-armed and long accustomed to firearms and occupying a higher plane than either of the two Northern tribes, they would disdain a desultory warfare, and would rush the defenses and carry them by sheer weight of numbers. For a while Boone thought to return to the camp and pick off the Breath, but abandoned the notion, realizing another would take his place, with the Cherokees' lust for vengeance more than doubled.

"An' to think that derned skunk of a Black Loon can git 'em into this fuss by first murderin' their messenger an' then fastenin' the killin' on to me!" wrathfully gritted Boone. He was compelled to give the Loon all credit for using his wits once the body of the Shawnee was found in the river. "Lord! Hope I didn't wipe out the Cantuck forts when I done for that red devil!" lamented the pioneer.

HE PASSED the night in the cave, feeling secure now that the Black Loon had returned to Boonesborough and only the Cherokees were in the neighborhood. Sleep and calm

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reflection refreshed his natural optimism. He and Kentucky had four days of grace. Ninety-six hours' leeway was a generous lease of life in Kentucky in the Spring of 1777, when each day carried the menace of death and made the land "a dark and bloody ground." To pioneers of the Dan'l Boone type four days' abeyance of an evil was a most luxurious deferment. Hastily finishing the meat left over from yesterday's supper he drank from a spring near the mouth of the cave and crept down to the ravine.

He had two objectives, a major and a minor. The first called for the circumvention of the Loon's trickery, thereby preventing the Cherokees from throwing their axes into the balance against the whites; the second was to get word to Kenton to lay low and not spoil the campaign by any spectacular bits of recklessness.

Once Kenton delivered the meat at the fort he would not rest until he was on his way back to the ridge. He would first make for the spot where he had launched his raft; it was there Boone knew he must communicate with him. Thus before taking up the great problem of balking Black Loon the pioneer made enough fire to char several pieces of deadwood. Next he procured a smooth strip of bark and laboriously printed:

WATE FOR ME HERRE IMPORTUNT.
BOON.

Armed with this message he hastened at top speed to the opening through the ridge and down to the river. He found signs evidencing a successful launching of the raft, while there was nothing to show the place had been visited since Kenton's departure. Selecting a tree on the edge of the grove he pegged the bark to it, and then proceeded down-stream for a mile. Turning about he began marking a trail which should lead his friend to the message.

His work would have escaped the notice of any except a super-woodsman. The Black Loon, should he pass that way in the daytime, doubtless would observe the "signs," although the printed word would be meaningless to him did he find it. The Loon, however, Boone assured himself, was miles away.

The pioneer marked his "trace" by leaning a dead branch up-stream, with a bit of lichen twisted 'round a tree trunk, its free end pointing up-stream, by an arrow faintly etched with his thumb-nail on the surface of an exposed birch, and by other similar signs. Did Kenton follow the river bank in the daytime he was sure to note some of the marks, and having discovered one would watch sharply for others. Should he come by night Boone depended upon his remaining in the grove until daylight, when he could not fail to find the warning.

Having done all he could to prevent his young friend from precipitating himself into the situation Boone returned to the ravine and knocked over several turkeys with a club and broiled enough to last him for twenty-four hours.

Now came the big game, the task of reconnoitering the Cherokee camp in broad daylight. It was in Boone's favor that the savages were going through the sacred rites, preliminary to taking the war-path; for the ceremony would hold them in camp. The pioneer felt no concern until within gunshot of the place.

He was gliding noiselessly over the shadow-freckled forest floor, his ears tuned to catch the mélange of voices across the river, when the crackling of underbrush on the bank brought him to a halt, frozen rigid like a thoroughbred pointer. Next he heard a voice, low and monotonous, and he knew a shaman was intoning a prayer. Stealthily advancing Boone at last beheld him standing near the water, the overhanging branches of oak and maple screening him from the view of those across the stream.

The shaman was holding a red bead between the thumb and first finger of the right hand, and, similarly, a black bead in the left hand. He was facing the east, his back to the white man, and he was beginning his address to Sunikta Gigagei—the Red Bead—and praying for blessings for his client, the Breath. He attired his client with the Red Garments of success, and fervently prayed that his war-whoop and war-club and shield should all be red, and as he did this he watched the red bead with a concentration that walled up his other senses.

The bead moved slowly down between the thumb and finger as if alive and seeking to escape, then up again, back and forth,

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and much faster. In a serpentine motion from side to side it passed below the first joint of the finger and with much liveliness darted back to the finger-tips. Boone had witnessed such spectacles before and was convinced the motion of the bead resulted from the shaman's high-strung emotion and the unconscious twitching of the finger muscles.

Ceasing his prayers to the red bead the shaman next addressed the black, pronouncing Boone's Indian name, and calling terrible curses down on the Big Turtle, and clothing him with the Black Garments of death.

It was all clear to Boone now. Pending the war-path rites the Breath, as a side issue, had employed the shaman to destroy the life of Boone, believing that Boone had killed the messenger Big-Head.

As the shaman implored destruction for the pioneer the black bead began to move, and, breathless, Boone followed its gyrations between the thumb and finger, and exulted as he observed how sprightly was its motion. As the bead darted up and down, from side to side, and passed well below the first finger joint the shaman's brow grew wet with sweat, and he increased the volume of his exhortations, frantic to lessen the liveliness of the bead; for if it excelled the red in motion it would portend the Breath's craving for vengeance must remain unsatisfied for the time. While Boone was not superstitious he was not averse to behold the sorcerer confounded by his own magic.

With a gesture of despair the shaman tossed his arms above his head; and as though this were a signal several Cherokees suddenly burst through the growth and flung themselves upon the pioneer and threw him to the ground and held him powerless.

"*Yu!*" shouted an exulting voice as Boone's hands were drawn behind him and bound.

The speaker was the Breath, flushed with success, and behind him stood four warriors. The gaze of all was directed in awe and admiration at the startled shaman.

"The magic of my brother comes from the east. It is all strong! *Yu!*" cried the Breath. "It gives into my hands the Big Turtle, the slayer of Uskwalena. My brother, the shaman, shall have all the red cloth his shoulders can carry at one time. It shall be so."

The shaman, fresh from defeat, glanced uneasily from the prostrate prisoner to the chief.

"I am the child of the Red Spirits," he slowly replied. "My medicine is strong."

Boone now found his voice, and roared:

"He is a false shaman! His medicine is weak as the blood of a rabbit. The Red Bead traveled between his fingers like an old man, broken by the Crippler (rheumatism). The Black Bead danced like a child at play. He is a liar when he says his medicine is strong."

"Ha!" yelped the Breath, spurning Boone's head with his foot. "You dog! A black house is prepared for you in the Darkening Land. You are turning blue. You shall soon go to the Black Spirits. All the white men in Kentucky shall soon walk the Blue Trail."

Then to his warriors.

"Carry him to the camp."

"Unlita will be wise to wait a bit!" warned Boone, infuriated that he should have been taken off his guard and thus allow the enemy to creep upon him with such ridiculous ease. "The shaman found his medicine weak. The Red Bead barely lived. The Black Bead traveled with the swiftness of the deer. If his medicine was strong and his magic red why has he not buried the Black Bead in the ground? Look! He holds it now in his left hand."

The shaman betrayed confusion, although he strove mightily to hold his composure. But he was the victim of his belief and feared his gods. As his clenched hand drew the steady gaze of each pair of savage eyes it opened, as if some invisible agency was opening it against the owner's will. And the Black Bead was revealed. Until the shaman made a hole in the ground with his finger and placed the bead therein and stamped upon it the ceremony could not be considered completed.

Even the Breath was disturbed. He sought to fortify himself by insisting:

"The magic brings Big Turtle to the torture. It is enough."

"If it sends the Turtle to the torture it is black magic sent by the night-goers to destroy the Cherokee Nation," protested Boone. "When it sends the Turtle to death it also sends the Cherokees into the hands of the Shawnees and the Wyandots, and all the bad Indians in the North, where dwell the Blue Spirits. What good

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can come to the Cherokee towns from the North?"

"THE Turtle speaks with a crooked tongue," fiercely denounced the Breath, yet studying the shaman uneasily. "The Shawnees and Wyandots are my brothers. They come to drive the white men into the sea."

"They come to lay blue paths for the Cherokees to walk in," was the ominous rejoinder. "If they take Kentucky they will also take your upper and lower towns, and your spirits will fade to nothing, and they will laugh at you when you are gone."

"The white man speaks loud for a man who has no magic," spoke up the shaman, unable to put aside the immediate fruits of success, although his superstitious soul was sorely troubled.

"*Hayi!* What does the Big Turtle say to that?" jeered the chief.

"That his magic is stronger than the sorcerer's," calmly retorted Boone. "He says his magic brought him here to have a peace talk with the Breath and to show the Breath the trap in the path ahead of him. You have bound me tightly, yet I live and talk to you. In what other way could I meet you and give you a peace talk? The Shawnee, called the Black Loon, has filled your ears with sickness. He has shown you the girdle and paint-bag Uskwalena wore, and he has told you he took them from Uskwalena's body when it was dragged from the river. Now if you knew Uskwalena was never in the river what would you say?"

The Breath essayed to believe this to be the despairing effort of a man jockeying with death in a wild attempt to escape his fate; but the prisoner's cold, deliberate voice demanded an answer. Besides, there was something peculiar in the shaman's attitude and demeanor. And the chief bruskly answered:

"I would say the Loon was a liar. But Uskwalena is dead and was thrown into the river——"

"Ha! What must you believe could you know Uskwalena was not thrown into the river, could you know the Loon never took the girdle and bag from the dead warrior found in the river?" cut in Boone.

A galvanic shock ran through the background of warriors. The chief registered the effect of Boone's speech less openly, yet it left an impression.

"This is little boy's talk," he mumbled. "The white man does tricks with his words."

"But the Loon brought you that which Uskwalena wore when killed. He says he found it on a dead warrior floating in the river. If Uskwalena was not thrown into the river—answer!"

"*Yuhahi!*" exclaimed one of the warriors.

The Breath frowned; then slowly admitted:

"Then the Loon took the paint-bag and girdle from Uskwalena. The Loon, or his friends, must have killed him. But the white man's magic is a lie! It is cunning like the terrapin. But it is a lie!"

"It is true!" cried Boone. "And the white man will prove it, not by his own magic but by the magic of the Cherokees. Set him on his feet and guard him closely. Pass rawhide from leg to leg so he can not run. The Cherokee gods shall prove who is the liar, Big Turtle or the Black Loon."

This sportsmanlike proposition thrilled the warriors' curiosity and aroused their respect. The shaman, his soul shaken with fear for his betrayal of the tribal gods, presented a sorry figure as he feebly raised his voice in protest. He firmly believed he must make compensation to the gods for his falsehood concerning the beads, but cupidity had led him to accept the red cloth from the chief; later he would make amends and yet maintain his shamanistic influence. Torn by greed and fear his opposition was not clear-cut and incisive. Ordinarily he would have been listened to, but now his very tone, let alone his bearing, smacked of uncertainty, or something worse.

"Let the Turtle stand. He can not escape," grunted a warrior.

Others cried the same, and the Breath gave the signal.

Boone was hoisted to his feet and a hobble placed about his ankles.

"Bring my hands before me and give me a stone worn smooth by the caresses of the Long Person, and give me a string," he commanded.

Thus he advertised his intention to appeal to the ancient and sacred Cherokee rite employed for seeking that which is lost; and the warriors increased their respect for him and prepared for dramatic possibilities. The Breath shouted to those

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across the river, who had remained aloof for fear of disturbing the shaman, and the entire camp came splashing to the bank to learn what was happening. By the time a water-worn rock and a line of deerskin had been provided for Boone all the members of the party understood the situation. Boone made the line fast to the rock and held it in due form between thumb and finger. The Breath ordered the warriors to form a wide circle around the prisoner, and directed:

"Let the Turtle do as he boasted. *Yu!*"

According to the shamanistic teachings the suspended rock would swing farther in the direction of the lost article than it would in the contrary direction; but Boone understood the trick of checking the pendulum-like motion by manipulating his fingers, and also knew how to cause it to swing at an angle, permitting him to move in a semicircle. Pausing a moment to survey the expectant faces he began the old Cherokee formula:

"Listen! Ha! Now you have drawn near to hearken, O Brown Rock! You never lie about anything. Ha! Now I am about to seek for it. I have lost a dead man, and now tell me where I shall find him. My name is Big Turtle."

As he finished he set the rock to swinging back and forth and stepped the length of his hobble. As he advanced the circle fell back. The false shaman, with teeth chattering, walked beside the chief, marveling what sort of sorcerer this could be who was confident to work magic through the red gods of the red people.

Anxious to reach the cave in the ravine as soon as possible Boone indulged in no frills, and proceeded as rapidly as the hobble would permit, all the time keeping up a running fire of remarks to the Brown Rock, mingled with stern denunciation of the Black Loon and all his people. As he completed one well-rounded period of abuse directed at the Loon a shrill cry rose in the forest ahead, and every Cherokee stiffened. Boone recognized it, the cry of a loon. To the Breath he said—

"Let nothing be said to the Shawnee that will tell him what we seek!"

"He shall know nothing. I will it to be so," replied the chief, his glittering gaze passing the order to the circle. "But if he is not shown to be a liar he shall be told all and allowed to torture the Turtle."

The Loon burst from cover and ran to join the Cherokees, not discovering Boone till he had entered the circle; then he came to a halt and gaped in amazement. With a sharp yell he grabbed for his ax and was seized by the Breath and bundled to one side.

"But it is Big Turtle, who has killed many of my people, who killed your young man, Big-Head," cried the Loon.

"For which he goes to the torture unless his magic saves him," grimly assured the Breath.

"What does he do?" demanded the Loon.

"He tries to save himself with the magic of the Cherokees," retorted the Breath. "If he fails his head shall keep alive and cry in pain days after his body is dead."

The Loon was perplexed. He scented an unusual climax, but could not imagine just what it would consist of. As the circle advanced and he walked beside the Breath, who talked to him graciously, he became more at ease. Even when the search entered the ravine he failed to guess the truth. But when Boone came to a halt below the screen of laurel and compelled the rock to describe half a circle a new intelligence disturbed the crafty visage of the Shawnee. He suddenly sought to work his way through the circle, only to be hurled back; while the Breath warned—

"Do not break the spell of the Cherokee magic, O Northern brother."

Then to Boone—

"The sun casts long shadows, White Man. The Brown Rock grow-weary."

"The Brown Rock will soon rest," replied Boone, agitating the cord with his little finger so as to make the rock bob up and down convulsively. "The Finder says we must go up over the rocks."

And he began climbing the bank and making straight for the laurel.

"The Big Turtle is tricking you!" screamed the Loon, endeavoring to hold back. "He leads you into a trap! Run back!"

Boone held the rock to his ear as though listening, and with a grunt of surprise exclaimed—

"*Hayi!* It whispers how three red men passed here a few sleeps ago and only two came back. Two walked, carrying the other. Ha! Draw near, O Brown Rock! Lay a red path for me. Lay a blue path for the slayer of Uskwalena. Show us

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where they placed him when they took the red hickories (hickory-bark girdle) from him, when they took the paint-bag from him. Ha! Little Rock, you never lie about anything!"

Mouthing in horrible fear the Loon would have thrown himself headlong down the rocks had not several warriors caught and held him. The eyes of the Breath glittered like little red coals. As Boone followed the arc of the swinging rock and led the way to the shelf behind the laurel a low gasp of astonishment rose from the warriors; for there was the opening to a cave they had known nothing about. The rock swung persistently toward this opening, and after a moment of hesitation the Breath, with drawn ax, entered ahead of Boone and ordered torches to be handed in. Lighting a torch he made way for the pioneer and commanded his men to follow with the Loon.

Boone passed directly to the second cave and with a violent swing permitted the rock to fly free and land beside the overhanging ledge. As the torches were brought forward the Cherokees forgot everything but the spectacle of the murdered messenger, minus his girdle and paint-bag. Black Loon's deceit was transparent. With one final burst of strength he fought his way to the outer cave, only to be overhauled and crushed to the floor. While this was occurring Boone slipped 'round the projecting ledge and made for the hidden corridor which led to the "back door."

BOONE and Kenton stood for some minutes surveying the deserted camp of the Cherokees. Ashes and smoking coals 'round a charred sapling told the gruesome story. Two black feathers, fastened to the top of the torture-stake told all comers who had died there.

"Poor devil! He'd been a big medicine-man if not nipped in the bud," observed Kenton.

"He was foolish to buck ag'in Cherokee medicine as handled by a white man," said Boone. "Well, with the Cherokees leggin' it for home I reckon old Cantuck can breathe sort of easy. If we work fast we can shove for home with that second raft-load of meat. D'ye know I sweat blood for fear ye wouldn't find my signs, but come blunderin' in afore I could finish my stent."

III

NOW that the Cherokees had refused to join the Shawnee and Wyandot Indians in war against the Kentucky forts the men of Boonesborough grew very optimistic. Their confidence was heightened by the large amount of fresh meat brought in by Boone and Simon Kenton. The bulk of this was salted down. The forest remained strangely quiet and the more credulous of the defenders believed the foe was disheartened over their failure to form an alliance with the Southern Indians and had retired to their towns beyond the Ohio.

Boone and Kenton knew better; the Shawnees were sure to suspect that white influence and cunning were responsible for the Cherokees' defection, while the fierce Wyandots would never quit the country without attempting a tenfold revenge for the killing of their warriors, especially for the death of their chief, Red Feathers.

Early one morning, after the last of the meat was placed in brine, some of the younger men insisted they be allowed to scout down the river to prove their contention that the savages had departed. Boone would not listen to this, replying:

"Kenton or me will go out tonight an' scout 'round a bit. Ye younkers ain't goin' to lose yer sculps by foolishness. This fort is hemmed in as tight as ever, only the Injuns have drawed back a trifle to plan new deviltry. I'm more skeered of this onnatural calm then I'd be of a attack in force. They're plottin' somethin' out there back-along." And he pointed to the brooding woods.

"Oh, Dan'l! Come here, Dan'l!" loudly called a settler from one of the four cabins forming the bastions.

It was Gutherie, one of the most dependable of men, and his request brought Boone quickly to attention. As he ran across the open space the young men followed at his heels, while from a cabin on the opposite side of the enclosure stalked the tall figure of Kenton.

"What is it, Gutherie?" Boone demanded.

"Somethin' I found an' couldn't fetch to ye. Left last night, stuck on top the stockade." He handed over two strips of bark, giving one to Kenton and one to Boone.

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Each piece contained a rude drawing of a coffin, the profile of a face showing at the top of each. Sticking into each head was a war-ax painted red. At the bottom of the drawing held by Boone was a picture of a large turtle, signifying the slaughtered man in the coffin was Big Turtle, or Boone himself. Kenton's picture differed from Boone's only in size, the coffin being drawn very long.

"Injun picters left for Dan'l an' Kenton," explained Gutherie to the curious group crowding about their leaders to glimpse the exhibits. "Each one promises death."

"No Injun drew this picter, Dan'l," mused Kenton, staring at his death notice carefully.

"Never," gravely agreed Boone. "The coffin notion is took from the whites by some one who's mixed with 'em. I have a man in mind, only he was kilt on the Nolichucky last March. What did ye mean, Gutherie, by sayin' ye couldn't fetch these to me? Ain't ye been relieved of standin' guard?"

"The picters is only part of what I found. Jest step this way a minute."

He led the way to the corner, formed by the inner wall of the cabin and the stockade, and removed a rough slab that masked a peep-hole.

"On the ground," he directed as Boone stooped and applied his eye to the aperture.

The pioneer gave a grunt of surprise as he beheld the imprint of a grotesquely broad foot, and a naked foot at that. The soil thrown out when the stockade was erected formed an excellent matrix for registering the tracks of an intruder. The tracks came in a straight line from the grass-ground and returned in the same direction.

Kenton, too impatient to await his turn at the peep-hole, stepped on the stringer binding the stockade timbers together, and balanced his long form over the top, regardless of the risk. One glance and he was crying—

"Thought you said he was killed on the Nolichucky, Dan'l."

"One of Sevier's men told me so when he got through with Jack's last message," defended Boone. "Said they brought the head to the Holston settlements an' set it on a pole to skeer any slaves from tryin' to run away."

"Dan'l, ye don't mean the Painter (Panther)?" hoarsely whispered Gutherie, with a nervous glance at the tree-tufted sky-line.

"No other hoof but his could 'a' left that trace," was the curt rejoinder.

The group was silent, and the young men no longer clamored for the privilege of scouting through the forest. For the "Painter," to use his colloquial name, was a fell beast, cursed and feared from the Watauga and Holston settlements to the Mississippi. According to Nolichucky Jack Sevier the Painter was dead and his head was weathering on a pole beyond the Cumberland Mountains. But none doubted the correctness of Boone's assertion, for none believed there were two men on the continent with feet so monstrous and so oddly shaped.

"Ye was on guard here last night, Gutherie," reminded Boone, jerking his head toward the cabin, the projecting second story of which afforded an open view of the skirts of the fort.

"I was, Dan'l; an' I didn't sleep on the job, neither," was the humble reply. "But that Painter is sly as the devil. Some even reckon he is the devil."

"He's a runaway slave with all the tricks of the white man an' the cunnin' of an Injun hitched up to a painter's thirst for blood," sharply retorted Boone, fearing lest any suggestion of the supernatural might weaken the morale of his small force.

Prob'ly," mumbled Gutherie; "but there ain't no Injun—not even the Black Loon, who ye sent below—what could sneak up to this wall without my hearin' him."

Kenton dropped to the ground and quietly informed:

"It rained till two hours before sunrise this morning. The tracks were made after it stopped raining. The Painter took the risk of being seen for the sake of seeing. That shows he planned to take a shot at some one through the loopholes after he planted his picters."

"Mebbe he heard Gutherie stirrin' 'round an' got skeered," suggested a youth.

Kenton smiled grimly. Boone declared:

"The Painter don't git skeered. He come on certain business an' somethin' called him away afore he'd finished it. That's the reason we're all alive this mornin'."

"It was something outside the fort that made him skedaddle," spoke up Kenton. "Just what that was is for us to find out.

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Wonder if he brought his drum with him?'

"Most likely," sighed Boone. "I'd rather know that two hundred fresh warriors had come from the Ohio then to know he's here with that medicine-drum. His comin' means there's somethin' stirrin' entirely different then the reg'lar Injun way of fightin'. That's why he's such a bad proposition; mixes up his white larnin' with Injun deviltry, an' it's hard to out-guess him."

"Reckon I'll take a scout and look for his trail," decided Kenton. "Have the men fire a few shots from the front gate and stand ready to cover me if I return flying."

The defenders of Boonesborough possessed the average borderer's courage, and that went for mountains of pluck; but there was an atmosphere of evil about the Painter that suggested the superhuman. No one insisted on going in Kenton's stead. They quickly obeyed Boone's order.

"Comb out the tree-tops along the front. The Painter's famous for hidin' in a tree an' shootin' down into forts."

THE Painter was a runaway negro who had been trained as a house-servant back in the Piedmont belt. He killed his master, a wealthy planter, and escaped to the lower towns of the Cherokees. Many slaves had thrown off the yoke by joining the Nation, but none had evidenced such unquenchable hatred for the white race as did the Painter.

It was the Cherokees' hesitation to join the Northern Indians at the outset of the attack on Kentucky that, in part, caused the Painter to shift his allegiance to the Shawnees, by whom he was treated with the greatest respect. The other influence impelling him to migrate north was the jealousy of the Cherokee shamans.

Returning scouts brought in many reports concerning the Painter. Some of these stories were wholly imaginary; but there was no questioning the man's cunning and marksmanship. Armed with a rifle he was worthy to rank with even Boone or Kenton. As his Indian allies were indifferent shots this fact alone made him a notable figure in any war-party. Possibly rumor had exaggerated his astuteness, but it would have been difficult to overestimate his courage and ferocity.

A giant in stature and a gorilla in strength, his appearance at any point on the border was the signal for redoubled precautions and increased apprehensions. Whenever his trail was happened upon—and he never wore any foot covering—it was a sure harbinger of bloody work. In the beginning of his career as a runaway he had counted many coups along the Wilderness Trail by joining bands of immigrants and begging protection, pretending he preferred returning to servitude to continuing the wild life of the open. Being accepted in this penitent rôle he would wait his chance and under cover of night slay and loot and escape.

The repetition of this trick soon made him well known, and for the past year he had confined himself to the red man's mode of attack. Undoubtedly some unfortunate runaway had genuinely desired to return to the settlements and had thrown himself on the mercy of a band of Holston pioneers, who promptly dispatched him, thinking him to be the Painter. This would account for Sevier's message that the Painter was dead.

Under Boone's lead the defenders "combed" every suspicious top until the pioneer knew Kenton must have reached the forest from the river side of the fort. He ordered the firing to cease, and added:

"It's jest a case of wait an' watch. Lord! But things was hard 'nough without the Painter comin' back to life to bedevil us! Ye can always tell what Injuns will likely do but the Painter mixes his tricks till he'd puzzle the old Nick hisself. It was him, workin' with Black Loon, that almost got the Cherokees to j'in in this fight. Now that Simon an' me sp'iled that game he's mighty mad at us. He's got some new plan of attack. Now every man watch out for Simon."

The men scattered to the four sides of the quadrilateral while Boone walked the rounds, pausing on each front to scan the silent forest. At last a sentinel at the front gate called out—

"Here he comes!"

There was a rush of moccasined feet and the stockade bristled with long brown rifle barrels; but Kenton's easy dog-trot told them he was not pursued.

"Did ye foller the trail?" demanded Boone as the gate closed behind the scout.

"Followed it for quarter of a mile. The

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Painter's made a kill. Cubson, of Harrodstown, is out there, killed by the ax and sculped. I found this inside his belt."

He handed a strip of deerskin to Boone.

Boone held it up and slowly spelled aloud:

"Send us powder. All but out. Jas. Harrod."

Then he softly murmured—

"Jim Harrod's messenger—dead."

"Poor Cubson is gone," said Kenton. "But he did his stent before pegging out. It's all plain now. The Painter stuck up the picters and was waiting to pick off a man when he heard something in the woods. Maybe Cubson was afraid we'd shoot him for an Injun, and being near gave a signal. Anyway the Painter stole back and killed him. Took his gun and knife and tobacco pouch, but missed the message. I knew Cubson's business must be important, so I searched him. Had the Painter found that piece of skin and could have read it, Harrodstown would be in ashes by this time."

Boone stuffed the message in his hunting shirt and ordered:

"Gutherie, measure out a hundred and fifty pounds of powder. Tie it in two bags. We'll start tonight, Simon."

"We can start now," urged Kenton. "There isn't an Injun within a mile or two of here. I believe we can make half the distance before sundown and break through by morning."

"If it was jest a matter of my ha'r an' yers I might say 'yes,'" slowly replied Boone. "But Jim Harrod's waitin' for powder. It's cost a life to git the word through to us. He must git that powder without fail; he's already paid a life for it. The reds don't know they're out of powder an' won't rush things jest yet. We'll travel tonight down the river by canoe; hide up at sunrise an' finish afoot across country tomorrer night. Poor Cubson. Let every man remember the Painter may be in any tree, at any loophole, at any minute."

AS BOONE and Kenton were preparing to leave the stockade for the river one of the men detained them by coming up and informing—

"Mis' Randel wants to see ye, Dan'l, most partic'lar."

Mrs. Randel was the Rock Crossing woman Kenton and Boone had rescued from the Shawnee camp down the river while on their first trip together after game. The shock of her experience as a captive had made her a nervous wreck and she seldom left her cabin. Loath to delay, yet feeling duty bound to wait on the woman because she was an invalid, Boone dropped his bag of powder over the fence and returned to the cabin. The woman possessed much intelligence and was somewhat above the intellectual plane of the average pioneer woman. She realized the importance of time to her rescuer; and the moment he opened the door she began:

"Beware of the black man called the Painter, Dan'l. He was often at the camp where I was held before they decided to burn me. He came to see the Black Loon. The two were very friendly and had some plan for ruling the Shawnee Nation. The Loon was to take Black Hoof's place as a great war chief, and the Painter was to be his prophet. I picked up their language when I went with my husband on his trading trips to their towns before this trouble broke out.

"They talked openly before me, and I learned it was the Painter's idea to get the Cherokees to help crush the forts here in Kentucky. The Loon was always taking credit for it, but I know it was the Painter's own notion. I believe he planned to have the Loon and Black Hoof clash, figuring on both being killed, when he would step in and boss things. The Painter would have been a great wizard for the Cherokees, because of his tricks brought from Virginia, and the Cherokee leaders were always sorry they let the shamans' jealousy and charges of witchcraft drive him away.

"I heard him tell the Loon he would go south and get the Cherokees to come into the fight by promising to return to them if they did so. No one but him could have brought them north and almost to the point of joining in the war. The Loon took the credit, of course, but it was the Painter's work. And he knows by this time how you spoiled his game. You look out for him, Dan'l; he knows black magic, the kind they know in Africa. Of course I don't believe in his devil's spells, and yet—and yet—oh, that terrible drum! I hear it awake and asleep——"

She broke down, sinking on a pile of buffalo robes, closing her eyes to shut out some pictures of the Painter practising his heathenish rites to further his influence over the Loon.

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"There, there, ma'am," soothed Boone, patting her shoulder. "Don't ye fret. I opine Simon an' me understand the natur of the beast right handsome. We'll look sharp. Jim Harrod's jest got to have that powder."

"Don't reckon the Painter as a common savage," she gasped between sobs. "He's cunning as a weasel. That drum ha'nts me! Jest a section of hollow log with the ends plugged and a long tongue cut in one side to make a vibrating noise. Nothing to look at, but when he beat it I was soul-sick. Oh, there were times when I believed he was the evil one himself."

"I know, I know," softly assured Boone. "But such tricks can't wipe out Cantuck. I know how to make gunpowder by leachin' the niter out of cave dust, boilin' of it down till I git saltpeter. That's a bigger trick then the Painter will ever know. Kenton's the first white man to plant an' harvest corn north of the Cantuck River. That's a bit of magic wurth more'n all the black magic the Painter's folks ever brought over from Afriky. So don't ye fret an' git to thinkin' them varmints can outguess Simon an' me. Stop yer snivelin', say yer prayers, an' go to sleep like a good gal."

With this paternal exhortation the pioneer hurried after Kenton. As they stole up-stream to secure the hidden canoe Boone repeated the gist of the woman's warning.

"She's right about his influence with the Shawnees and Wyandots," said Kenton. "I don't take any stock in his black magic, but the Injuns swear by it. And that's as bad for us as if it was genuine. They think his drum is the biggest medicine ever let loose. And he knows all their own medicine, too."

Boone gently drew the canoe from the hollow trunk of a five-foot elm, and after steadying it in the water, asked—

"Why wouldn't he be a first-rate cuss to kill, Simon?"

"He would, Dan'l! He would!" Kenton heartily agreed. "We'll do it, too. Best job we can do for Kentucky."

"All in good time," qualified Boone. "The powder must git through first."

Their immediate problem was to make the greatest distance before dawn, when they must hide until night. And almost at the outset, when they were only a few miles below the fort, they came upon proof of the Painter's cunning. The canoe was taking full advantage of the mid-stream current, when Boone in the bow beheld a ruddy reflection ahead where the river rounded a wooded point. With a powerful sweep he sent the canoe close inshore.

"Got a fire down-stream," he whispered. "If we'd poked our nose 'round that bend they'd spotted us. We'll land an' look things over."

Climbing the bank they gained the point and were surprised to discover the fire was burning on a raft in the middle of the river.

"Lord! Th' Painter figgered on our comin' an' has bottled us up!" gasped Boone, much dismayed.

Kenton cursed fluently under his breath, and fiercely announced—

"One of three things; go ahead full tilt and trust to luck, or quit the canoe and strike across country, or tote the canoe below the next bend."

"There's a fourth way," mused Boone. "Swim to the raft an' cut it apart so's to drown the fire, an' go through flying in the dark."

"A wise old head, Dan'l!" softly cried the delighted Kenton. "And why didn't I think of it myself? I'll do the swimming as you're a poor swimmer. You stick here with the canoe and powder while I mix things. When I screech twice like a loon you come booming along and be ready to pick me up at the next bend. If I ain't there cache one of the bags and get the other through to Harrod."

As he talked he divested himself of hunting-shirt and trousers.

"Ye can't make it from here! They'll see ye!" protested Boone.

"Wait till I get through," chuckled Kenton, groping along the bank till he found a small mass of driftwood and dry grass hung up in the reeds.

This he pushed into the current and repeated the maneuver until he had a small flotilla drifting down-stream. As he worked he explained:

"They'll be mighty suspicious that a white man is hiding under one of these bundles. They'll keep looking into them and finding nothing. Then they'll shift their attention up-stream, wondering what started the stuff, and why. If my luck's with me I'll be at the raft and have the fire out and you'll be on your way to join me before they get up here to investigate.

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Boone ceased protesting and with keen interest watched the various clumps of débris sail down the middle of the river. Almost immediately Indians pushed off in canoes from both banks, while those on the raft leaped overboard and swam out with knives between their teeth. As Kenton had said, the first patches of drift were thoroughly explored with spears from above, and by the swimmers from below. After this performance had been repeated several times the Indians remained content to give each little argosy a perfunctory thrust while their gaze wandered upstream.

"Now they'll be coming," warned Kenton. "But they'll stop to beat the banks both sides. I'm off."

Boone crawled back in time to see his friend release three clumps of deadwood, cover his hair with dried grass and swim away easily at the end of a log. The Indians continued staring at the point, and the floating masses ahead of Kenton, inclining to drift inshore, were overhauled and examined. His own particular log was ignored as it was making straight for the raft. Kenton quickly learned why he was thus favored.

A gigantic figure, which he knew must be the Painter, was standing on the edge of the raft, a huge lance held high above his head. His whole attention was being given to the approaching log. As Kenton drew nearer the Painter threw back his head and sounded the infuriated scream of the panther. The savages ashore and afloat suspended their efforts and listened. In the Shawnee tongue the Painter directed:

"Hunt the banks and find what makes this wood float down when it is the time of low water."

KENTON located two lines of rawhide made fast to the sides of the raft to hold it in place, and gathered his legs under him. He struck out violently and sent the log bumping into the raft. The Painter lost his balance and fell overboard. As the log struck Kenton dived and swam under the raft, coming up within reach of the line. One slash of his knife severed this. The raft, held by the other line, began drifting inshore.

As he dived to get beneath it a huge hand clamped about his right leg. The instant he was seized he lunged downward and backward and felt his knife meet with resistance while his leg was released. With a kick he was under the raft, his head bobbing up between the timbers, the heat from the fire baking his face. A confused hubbub was resounding from shore to shore, while near-by, floating like a grotesquely carved gourd, was a round black poll showing a raw red welt across the skull. And from it was issuing terrific roars of rage.

Inhaling, Kenton sank and swam inshore. When he came to the surface the raft was between him and the Painter. The latter was treading water, streaming blood and screaming like a maniac. It was fortunate for both the pioneers that the black man should for the moment lose his mental balance. Kenton took advantage of his condition to sever the thongs holding the raft timbers together. It was a simple matter to force them apart until with a mighty hiss the red-hot rocks and blazing brands dropped into the water.

Darkness came down like a cloudburst of ink, and the Painter at once recovered his reason, and shouted to the Indians to surround the disintegrating raft. The crucial point had passed, however, so far as Kenton was concerned; and throwing back his head he gave a signal for Boone to advance, and dived deep and swam downstream.

Now the advantage had shifted and was with him and Boone. Each knew that every man encountered in the velvet darkness was an enemy; whereas the Indians met and clashed before discovering their errors. With a knife between his teeth Kenton swam easily, highly delectated when he heard savage grappling with savage.

A canoe passed close by him and he could not resist the temptation to capsize it. A hand, flung out at random, caught in his long, fair hair, but before the warrior, amazed at the fine texture of the imprisoned locks, could more than grunt, the borderer struck his knife under his captor's arm and was free. He was well below the Indians and abreast of the bend when he came to the surface. Pandemonium still reigned up-stream. Warriors attracted from the forest were beginning to arrive at the banks, each fresh group adding to the confusion by seeking to learn what had happened.

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Suddenly a terrible cry rose from the Painter, instantly followed by two rifle shots in quick succession. Kenton recognized the voice of his own gun, and his heart skipped a beat as a medley of howls followed the shots. Then something was upon him in the darkness, and he caught the swift, soft stroke of a paddle. It might be an Indian but he had to risk it; and making ready to dive he sharply whispered—

"Dan'l Boone?"

"Git in, Simon, wherever ye be," drawled Boone's quiet voice.

As Kenton swam to the stern and accomplished the delicate task of boarding, Boone bent to his paddle with redoubled vigor, snapping over his shoulder:

"Had a fuss with some of 'em. What a rumpus to make over takin' a leetle powder down-river!"

"I creased the Painter's head with my knife. I was a fool not to get him," grumbled Kenton, belting his ax around his naked body and picking up the second paddle.

"Save yer wind. They'll be hammerin' along after us in two shakes," warned Boone.

THROUGHOUT the night they were pursued by land and water, those ashore cutting across country to intercept them at the various bends. Dawn found them snugly concealed under an overhanging bank, which in turn was hidden by a rank growth of willows, the drooping branches trailing in the water. Their hiding-place extended a dozen feet beyond the edge of the water, forming a small and comparatively dry cave. Boone elected to sleep while Kenton kept the first watch with the two rifles leaning against the canoe.

An hour had passed when the young borderer sensed a vibration in the ground overhead. The Shawnee trackers were searching the banks for traces left by the voyagers provided they had quit the river for the forest. At the meridian hour Kenton touched Boone with his foot and pointed to the rifles and took his turn sleeping.

Boone had barely settled himself in a comfortable position when a canoe, containing two warriors, came up-stream, returning from the fruitless pursuit. It kept inshore to escape the current, and as it leisurely advanced Boone caught enough to know that the happenings of the night remained a most mysterious affair to the Indians. The warrior in the bow even suggested that the entire disturbance was the result of the Painter's powerful medicine playing him a perverse trick.

"The mighty black one was cut on the head. He says a white man did it," demurred the warrior seated in the stern; and he caught a willow branch within a dozen feet of Boone and held the canoe motionless while he studied the bank ahead.

"Are the white men fools?" countered the other warrior. "Why should one of Big Turtle's men cut the raft loose and kill the fire? If he could get to the fire unseen he could pass it unseen. The Black Panther fought with a wizard."

This declaration caused the Indian in the stern to shiver with superstitious fear, and release his hold on the willow.

"The Panther has mighty medicine," he mumbled. "Two rifles were fired by some one in the middle of the river."

"The Shawnees fired rifles. I fired a rifle. No one saw who fought against him. Big Tomahawk struck Running Bear with his ax. The Shawnees fought as if witches had stolen their souls. An evil spirit came down the river, or up the river. The Panther fought with witches."

"The Panther's medicine-drum will tell him all about it," was the stout reply. "His drum will tell him tonight how to take Harrodstown. He has said it. It shall be so."

The paddles dipped and the canoe passed on. Boone forgot to be thankful for his escape in wondering just how the Painter planned to capture Harrodstown. Could he suspect Jim Harrod's lack of gunpowder?

When Kenton awoke Boone told of his eavesdropping, and anxiously observed:

"Whether he knows of Jim's bein' out of powder, or not, the result will be the same if he rushes the place afore we git there. I opine we must shove along mighty pert."

"Wish I'd cut his dog-gone head off!" sighed Kenton.

The shadows of the willows now succeeded in bridging the river, and the pioneers realized they must soon risk the perils of the forest. In anticipation of

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leaving the hiding-place Kenton crawled under the branches for a last drink. He sprawled his long form over the rocks and was greedily sucking down his first mouthful when a rifle spat from a patch of cane on the opposite shore, and a bullet whined in under the bank. He instantly "froze," knowing he had not been seen, but that a hidden watcher had detected some movement of the trailing branches.

"Can you spot him?" whispered Kenton, still motionless.

"The cane is waggin'," murmured Boone, resting his long rifle over the canoe. "He don't reckon he was really shootin' at anythin' more'n a river rat, still he will be cur'ous 'nough to nose 'round. Don't budge! It's a canoe. She's pokin' through the cane. There's two of 'em. I'm shovin' yer rifle alongside. If they git too nosey I'll fire. Then ye jest take what I leave. That shot will bring a cloud of their friends down here mighty quick an' they mustn't larn what the cuss fired at."

The canoe slowly emerged from the cane and commenced crossing diagonally, straightening out when in mid-stream and coming head-on toward the willows. As Boone sighted along his rifle he gave a start of surprised delight; the two warriors were in perfect alinement. He fired and the man in the bow crumpled up without a sound. The second warrior emitted a loud yell and fell into the water.

"Two at one shot!" proudly cried Boone, pushing the branches aside with the butt of his rifle.

Kenton rose to his knees and glared enviously at the overturned canoe. Suddenly he yelped in boyish glee and scarcely pausing to take aim fired at a dark object making for the cane.

As the savage's head disappeared he taunted:

"Only one and a fraction, Dan'l. You needed me to finish him off."

"I hit him anyway," ruefully insisted Boone. "I figgered—Lord Harry! Ye missed him, Simon!"

And with a groan of dismay he pointed at a dusky form wriggling into the cane. Neither had reloaded, and before a rifle could be made ready the wounded warrior vanished.

"That means the whole Nation will be on our necks," quietly remarked Kenton. "We must take the canoe and land below the next bend without leaving a trace. Then we must set the canoe afloat and trust it will go a long distance before getting hung up."

Reloading, they risked discovery in paddling with all their might down the middle of the river, an easy target from either bank. They ceased their efforts only when a turn in the stream cut off their view of the willows. Now came the ticklish work of leaving the canoe without betraying the maneuver. Kenton was for catching the overhanging limb of a mighty oak and gaining the bank by swinging into the tree. Boone objected, saying:

"Our weight would make the end dip in the water. If they git here afore dark they'd notice it first thing. Listen; we'll leave so many signs they'll opine we did it to make 'em believe we've landed. Drive into that marshy spot near the white rock."

The canoe was sharply sent into the mud, leaving a trace a child could read. Taking pains to step heavily and often in the muck they carefully shoved the canoe back and then lifted and carried it to firm ground and placed their powder on a flat rock. With much finesse they next worked their way to the bank that overhung the river, and with a gentle toss threw the canoe into the current and had the satisfaction of seeing it bob buoyantly away. Returning opposite the white rock, and this time leaving but the slightest of traces, Kenton swung out on a branch, taking care to break off some of the smaller twigs, and hanging by one hand paddled the water against the side of the rock with the butt of his gun.

"There's the whole story for them," he announced and grinning broadly as he swung back to the bank. "We landed and left a trail to make them think we shoved off the canoe and stayed here. Then we swarmed out that branch and one of us dropped down on the rock and slipped into the water and splashed the side of the rock, and got into the canoe and come back and took the other aboard from the tree, and sailed away down-stream."

Kenton was very optimistic as they slung on their loads and glided down the dusk-filled forest aisles; for in woodcraft, with night to help them, he knew he and Boone were more than a match for the most astute savages in Kentucky.

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But the judgment of forty-three years is often broader and more far-seeing than that of twenty-one; and Boone dampened his young friend's enthusiasm by saying:

"Can we dodge 'em? Yes; that'll be easy. But jest dodgin' 'em won't git any powder to Jim Harrod. They'll find the canoe hung up in some eddy. Once that's done they'll know the trick we've played 'em."

"What of it?" demanded Kenton. "I want them to know we've fooled them and have a fine start."

"The minute they larn we've took to the woods the Painter will figger it all out," continued Boone. "He knows we didn't quit the stockade to go ramshacklin' 'round for the fun of it. He'll know we ain't out after game right on top of fetchin' in two raft loads. So he'll opine we've got mighty important business; an' it won't take much brains for him to figger there's only one place we can have business with—Harrodstown.

"That leaves him jest one keerd to play; make it a race across country an' throw a hedge of Injuns 'round Harrodstown, then do the same at Boonesborough, so we can't beat back home. We've got to go mighty careful an' keep our eyes peeled for reds. The Painter won't care how much of a lead we've got if he can reach Harrodstown ahead of us. Once he's got both forts guarded ag'in our comin' he can take his time in lookin' us up sort of pers'nal."

"I don't like your medicine," glumly retorted Kenton, his boyish face losing its exultation. "By your tell he gets us either coming or going, while Jim don't get the powder."

"I'm jest tellin' what he opines to do," corrected Boone. "We must make Harrodstown ahead of him. We must shove along hot-foot an' trust to luck an' the Almighty."

Kenton quickened his pace, his long legs fairly flying over the damp forest floor, eager to cover the bulk of the distance before the light entirely failed them. Without any apparent effort Boone trotted at his heels, his blue eyes roaming from side to side, his rifle held ready for use over his left arm. Both were familiar with every mile of the country, and the course they laid was as near a straight line as natural obstacles would permit.

SHORTLY after midnight they struck into a branch of the Great War Trail. This led them to a small stream which they purposed following until north of Harrodstown.

It was while pausing to rest on the bank of this stream that they first heard the Painter's drum. It boomed and throbbed through the forest, a hoarse and sullen voice that rumbled like distant thunder. It was entirely different from the Indian drums the pioneers were acquainted with. It lacked the insistent, staccato *thud, thud*, of the red man's instrument, and instead of being explosive in its utterances its voice possessed an ominous and space-filling quality that reverberated strangely.

As they listened the volume increased, as though the drum were being advanced toward them; then, as gradually, it dwindled to a low, dull murmuring. It brought to Boone a fantastic vision of a strange country, rank with tropical vegetation and filled with dusk and steaming with mists, through which flitted a dark people—a country of mystery.

"Queer medicine," whispered Kenton. "Some notion the Painter's people fetched from Africa. But where the devil is it? Before us? Behind us? Sounds everywhere."

Boone tilted his head and began picking the sinister voice apart, and tersely announced:

"The Painter's won the race. He's between us and Harrodstown. He outguessed us. Left some of the Shawnees to hunt the canoe while he hustled cross country to guard ag'in our comin'. Wonder if he's got any medicine that tells him how it's goin' to end."

"I can tell him if his medicine can't," was the grim reply. "I'm going to cut his ha'r when we meet up again."

"He's reg'lar man-size, all right," moodily agreed Boone. "It would be fine to watch ye two meetin' up. But first we must git the powder through to Jim."

They spoke under their breath and yet their voices must have carried to some prowler, for as Boone finished something whizzed by his face and struck with a *plunk* against an evergreen, and for a moment vibrated venomously. Both sank to the ground, Kenton's hand pressing down on Boone's shoulder as a signal for him to remain inactive. Boone next felt

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his friend's bag of powder slipping noiselessly to his side, and he knew the young borderer was off to reconnoiter the darkness. The drum ceased beating and the little stage was all set for the impending tragedy.

Boone sought to follow events with his keen ears, but Kenton was now at his best, and there was no sound to indicate his position, or that of his quarry. From the stream shrilly rippled and boomed the frogs' ancient chorus. Up the bank a four-footed prowler followed his quest for food. Boone counted one, two, three—ten minutes of this orderly quiet before the harmony of the night was broken by a smothered cry, and the sound of heavy bodies threshing about.

Boone stole toward the disturbance, but it was all over before he had proceeded a rod. Squatting on his heels he awaited the verdict. An owl called, and he relaxed and lowered his ax. The call came again, this time much nearer, and he thrust the ax into his belt. But the first he discovered of Kenton's return was when the borderer stood close beside him and whispered his name.

Rising, Boone reached for his friend's hand and encountered the string of a tautly strung bow.

"He had an old Queen Anne musket, but was using this as being more safe and silent," murmured Kenton. "I fetched it along with his quiver, thinking we might want to shoot a message into the fort."

"I knew it was a arrer waggin' back an' forth in that tree," returned Boone. "Take yer powder an' we'll move along."

One might have fancied the drum possessed a magical vision and was watching them, for as they renewed their advance up-stream it began a long roll. While not an imaginative man Boone found himself wondering if it wasn't the Painter's voice, instead of a drum, warning all red men around Harrodstown of the white men's approach.

"All moonshine," he muttered in disgust. "The Painter may be big medicine, but he can't spot us in the dark."

Nevertheless he essayed to practise new caution as he took the lead. Jim Harrod's stronghold was only a few miles distant, and another hour would bring a faint glow in the east, the ceremonial fires lighted by the Red Spirits to announce the coming of the sun. The darkness was their insurance against discovery; daybreak would cancel the policy. As they left the stream and moved south, directly toward the fort, the woods began to thin out; and after a mile of easy walking they became conscious of a faint glow ahead.

The drum resumed its hoarse chanting. Faint cries sounded in the east, heralding the coming of warriors from the Kentucky River, and doubtless beating up the country as they advanced. The pioneers pressed on until the bolls of the ancient trees became outlined in the vague light.

The drum ceased with startling abruptness; then burst forth in a furious crescendo that permitted them to locate it directly ahead. Stealing from tree to tree they came to a stump-dotted area through which straggled a line of bushes. Beyond the bushes was a large fire.

Boone nudged Kenton's ribs and pointed to left and right, where ruddy blooms punctuated the night at regular intervals, and whispered—

"They've ringed the fort with fires, thinkin' to keep us out."

Kenton nodded, scarcely interested, for it was the blaze beyond the bushes that concerned him. There the Painter, swart and gigantic, sat in the middle of a dense circle, a club bound in buckskin held in his right hand. A quarter of a mile beyond the fire stretched a fringe of hardwood growth. Behind that stood Harrodstown.

The opening now blocking the adventurers' advance marked the spasmodic attempts of Harrod's men to deforest and cultivate the wilderness during the lulls in Indian warfare. Boone drew Kenton close and whispered:

"Heaps of Shawnees an' Wyandots comin' up behind us, comin' nearer every minute. We've got to make the fort mighty soon, fires or no fires."

"There's a gob of color in the east that doesn't come from the fires," replied Kenton. "Ahead it is. We come a-purpose to break through."

Boone commenced crawling to the line of bush-growth that would afford cover nearly across the clearing, although it would bring them uncomfortably close to the circle of warriors. Passing from stump to stump they finally gained this shelter and edged on until only a few rods from the blaze.

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Two factors were in their favor; the Indians were not expecting them so soon, as evidenced by their failure to throw out scouts; and the Painter's performance on the drum had deadened the objective faculties of the warriors. The circle of fires was a precautionary measure, characteristic of the Painter, although not seriously believed to be necessary as yet. Again the large number of braves massed around the Painter testified to a light guard at other points. The savages had congregated to watch the black make his strange medicine; and the Painter, puffed with vanity, was well content to hold the middle of the circle.

As the white men gained peep-holes through the bushes the Painter loudly chanted some heathenish rites, accompanying his unintelligible words with strokes on the drum. The latter, so far as the pioneers could make out, had been fashioned from a hollow log by plugging the two ends and cutting a long vibrating tongue on one side, or as described by Mrs. Randel. Black as ebony in the weird light the Painter turned his ferocious visage toward the east, his lips fluttering in bestial ecstasy. Next he was shouting and mouthing words like a madman, words that had no meaning for his red brothers, but which held them spellbound.

Abruptly ceasing his gibberish he ranged his big eyes 'round the circle, then thumped his drum and tilted his head as though listening. Jumping to his feet he glared toward the hiding-place of the white men. Kenton believed they were discovered and instantly covered the tall figure with his rifle. Boone slipped his hand over the priming, and the next moment the wild gaze shifted, and in the Shawnee tongue the Painter began:

"THE Drum of the Panther tells me it smells white men. They come. Behind them come the Shawnees and Wyandots, driving them here into a trap. Listen; red brothers, I found a white man in the woods near Boonesborough. I killed him." With a dramatic pause he drew a sodden object from his girdle of rabbit-skins, and Boone and Kenton gritted their teeth. "We can not dance this scalp, for I feed it to the Drum. The Drum has the stomach of a panther."

With nimble sleight of hand he seemingly thrust the scalp through the solid side of the drum and was rewarded by a low grunt of awed admiration. Continuing, he said:

"That white man was sent from Harrodstown. He was sent to bring help. Harrodstown is afraid because the Panther has come back from the Cherokee towns. Harrodstown sent for the Big Turtle to bring help, and the Turtle and his friend, the Tall Hunter, found the dead man in the woods and started for Harrodstown to find out what the man called Harrod wanted of them. The medicine of the Drum tells me that."

Again he paused and listened to the drum, whispering softly; and, aloud, informed:

"The Drum is very hungry. It says one scalp is not enough. It must have the scalps of the two white men, now trying to reach Harrodstown. The Drum says that after it has eaten those scalps it will help my red brothers strike the ax into every fort in Kentucky."

"Ha!" exclaimed the warriors, raising the knives and axes.

The Painter crouched by the drum and humbly assured:

"You shall be fed, Drum of the Panther people. But my red brothers need your help in catching the two white men. Ho!"

With an excellent pantomime of joy at what the drum was telling him he indulged in more legerdemain and caused the hidden watchers to blink in surprise as he apparently drove his fist and arm through the solid shell of the log and brought forth two strips of bark. With an exultant yell he leaped to his feet and held the pieces of bark above his head.

"The Drum now speaks to the united council-fires of the Northern Indians!" he shrieked, his fierce features convulsed by some terrific hysteria. "It will bring the Big Turtle and the Tall Hunter to the torture-posts of the Shawnees and Wyandots! Look!" And he held the bark within the glare of the fire and slowly turned it so all might see. "Here are the black boxes used by the whites in burying their dead. Here is one with the Big Turtle's totem on it. Here is one, very long, for the Tall Hunter. A red ax sticks in each."

And he passed over for closer inspection the duplicates of the pictured threats he had left on the Boonesborough stockade.

"Dernation! It's gittin' mighty light! Let's try for it," whispered Boone.

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Kenton began fumbling with the cord that bound the bag of powder to his shoulders, and muttered:

"A minute. Half a minute."

Thus far the Painter had played upon the credulity and superstitions of his audience. Now he was evidencing astuteness in place of cunning. With a tap of his drum-stick he called the warriors' attention back from the pieces of bark and made Boone forget his great haste to be departing by curtly announcing—

"Every fort in Kentucky can be taken and burned if the medicine of the Drum is obeyed. My red brothers, the Drum says you are foolish to attack three forts at the same time. I have lived among the white men and I know this; they do not intend to leave Kentucky. The Drum asks: 'Why do the red men attack the forts at the same time? Are they afraid a fort will run away.' So says the Drum.

"Now listen to the words of my medicine if you would have Kentucky all red. Draw all your young men from Boonesborough except a few scouts. Call in all your men from Logan's station. Call all warriors in from the white man's Wilderness Road. Bring all here to Harrodstown. Do this and attack the fort with your whole force and you will capture it easily. While you are doing this the other two forts will think you have taken the Warrior's Path home. Then go to Boonesborough with all your men and capture that place. After you've danced their scalps go on to Logan's and do the same. Then Kentucky will be yours."

Every guttural throat grunted its approval of this plan, so simple and yet so effective.

"By Heaven! The black devil speaks true!" mumbled Boone. "They can do it as easy as sin that way. We must git to Jim Harrod an' rig up some scheme to offset it."

"Just a second," begged Kenton, softly removing his flint and steel from the pouch at his belt.

The Painter, exalted by the impression he had scored, and intent on further chicanery, commenced in a shrill sing-song:

"The Drum has more medicine for my red brothers, a medicine that shall show them how to take the land from the cowardly Cherokee after the whites have been struck in the head. Ha!"

And once more he bent over the drum and appeared to thrust his hand through the tough wood. Just what he proposed to produce in the shape of omen or medicine neither the Indians nor the pioneers were destined to learn; for at that moment Kenton with practised ease drew the Shawnee bow in a half-circle and discharged a wabbling arrow into the heart of the fire. There followed a blinding flash and an explosion, and a rain of fire-brands, which sent the Painter tumbling headlong and yelling with pain, and scattered the warriors in a frantic scramble to escape.

"They wasn't looking for that particular message," chuckled Kenton, stooping low and streaking behind the bushes for the hardwood growth.

"Lord! Hear 'em howl!" ejaculated Boone. "I'd never thought of it in the world. Simon, ye're a smart younker."

"Cost me a mighty good buckskin pouch and nearly a pound of Harrod's powder. Filled her so heavy she'd never made the distance if we'd been a bit farther away."

"It'll raise Cain with the Painter's medicine unless he offsets it at once," rejoiced Boone.

They were now in the grove and Kenton, a bit in the lead, sharply warned:

"Watch out! Two coming dead ahead to learn what the racket means."

Dodging aside to let these pass the pioneers quickly discovered there were other warriors close at hand; presumably arriving from the various fires to investigate the yells so obviously the result of pain. Some of these glimpsed the white men as the latter were about to quit the belt of trees for a last dash to the fort. The newcomers, however, were a bit bewildered and nonplussed by the clamor being raised by the scorched braves, and hesitated a moment before attacking.

Boone dropped the nearest on his side and reloaded as he ran. Then Kenton fired, but now the pressure was so great that Boone could not wait till his friend had reloaded, and with a loud yell to announce his identity to the silent fort he discharged his piece and hurled his ax, again staying the advance on his flank. Kenton, hard pressed, passed over his empty rifle and began using the bow and arrows, shooting with marvelous dexterity and precision.

As they fled across the clearing to the fort, repeatedly calling their names, they

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were astounded to receive no response. They would have turned aside to the security of the woods, but now the Painter was sending forth his infuriated cries and leading his red horde to the pursuit.

"Shoot, Jim! For God's sake, shoot!" yelled Boone.

A ripple of fire and a crash told them the stockade was awake, and they heard the welcome sound of Jim Harrod's voice calling on his men to waste no bullets.

Reaching the high fence the runners first threw over their weapons and the bags of powder, and then leaped to grasp the eager, down-stretched hands. As Boone went over the top in a sprawling heap he glimpsed the Painter standing in full view at the edge of the clearing, his huge bulk exaggerated by the first misty light of morning, his arm drawn back to hurl the heavy ax. The flight of the ax set the record for Kentucky, for it winged its glittering circles completely across the clearing and bit deep into one of the upright timbers. At the risk of his life Boone leaned over the stockade and wrenched it loose.

Then dropping to the ground he stretched out in luxurious relaxation and mildly rebuked—

"Took yer time to git to shootin', Jim."

Harrod, desperately pawing powder from one of the bags, only paused long enough to apologize:

"We had to make it count, Dan'l. It was our last round."

KENTON slept till dusk and on awakening learned that Boone had been up for several hours. Snatching up his rifle he hurried forth to find him, eager to be off for Boonesborough. On observing a group of settlers by the gate he forgot his friend for the time; for standing with his back to the stockade and faced by the men was a painted and shaven and oiled Shawnee warrior, on whose breast was painted a turkey-cock.

"Here's one of your friends, Simon," called out Harrod. "We let him in as he said he wanted to see you."

"He's no friend of mine," gritted Kenton, dropping a hand to his belt and striding toward the red man menacingly.

"My white brother forgets Running Turkey of the Palawa (Turkey) clan?" asked the guttural voice reproachfully.

"—— your hide! I never saw a Shawnee yet I could forget," wrathfully cried Kenton. From the corner of his mouth he hissed in warning: "Guard the stockade! There's a trick in this."

He was astounded to behold his friends doubling up with laughter, and feared that they had gone mad. Then he beheld a miracle; the paint on the Indian's face cracked in a broad smile. And the eyes, he noted, were blue.

"Dog-gone your miserable pelt!" he roared, shaking his fist at Boone. "Had to make a fool of me, didn't you?"

"I opine I'll pass muster, Simon, if I can fool ye," chuckled Boone.

"What does this business mean? Faugh! You even smell like a Shawnee."

"It means we're goin' after the Painter an' that I'm goin' to nail him, if the good Lord loves Cantuck," soberly declared Boone.

"Not by a jugful!" exploded Kenton with the heat of youth. "The Painter's my particular meat."

"We'll talk about that outside," was the calm retort. "Scatter a few handfuls of lead from this side, Jim. An' post some of yer best men at the back to cover us if we're driven back. If we git the Painter the reds will forgit his military advice I've been tellin' ye about. If we miss him ye must rig it to git to Logan's."

With a hasty handshake he and Kenton passed through the rear gate and ducked into the cover of some bushes. Here they stood and listened and studied the forest beyond. There came the voice of the drum from the opposite side of the fort and sounding as though deep in the woods.

"All's clear," whispered Boone. "He's p'izen mad an' is gittin' 'em together to hear him explain why his medicine cut up so."

"You don't seem to be reckoning me in on this game at all," growled Kenton.

"The Painter's my meat, Simon, much as I hate to dis'p'int ye. He's jest got to be wiped out so the Injuns won't take any stock in his advice. Otherwise he'll dance every white sculp in Cantuck. Ye're a mighty good man, Simon; better'n me in lots of things. If it was jest a question atween ye an' the Painter I'd love to see ye wade into him. But there mustn't be any slip-up when Cantuck's the stake. Again ye couldn't git near him without a

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rig like this, an' it took hours to fix me up! Harrod an' his men cut an' pulled my ha'r while ye slept—mostly pulled. It hurt. It won't stop hurtin' till I've given the Painter's ax back to him." And he patted his belt fondly.

"Just what are you going to allow me to do?" coldly asked Kenton.

"Ye are to take my gun an' hoof it back to where ye bagged yer Shawnee an' got his bows an' arrers. If ye're jumped don't try to stick 'round, but shove for Boonesborough. If I don't get in send an express to th' Watauga, sayin' Jim Harrod's people an' my people will try to fall back to Logan's. Jim understands what to do. Now here's where we part. An' good luck, my boy."

"I'm running great risks," sneered Kenton. Then, contritely: "I don't reckon I'll be jumped, Dan'l. You'll most likely pick me up when you strike for home."

And he took his friend's hand and wrung it warmly, and vanished in the gloom.

Drawing a light blanket over his shoulders Boone took the opposite direction, guided by the steady pulsing of the Painter's drum. He took no pains to conceal his presence, and as he came within sight of a fire he observed other figures making for it. One savage fell in beside him and remarked:

"They say the black one has a witch in his medicine."

"Ha!" grunted Boone. "My ears are long. I come from the Wilderness Road. What does the medicine of the Panther say, brother?"

Pleased to have an auditor who had witnessed none of the recent phenomena the Shawnee related the strange happenings at the fire and averred there was some question as to the potency of the Painter's magic. In fact, so serious was the situation that Black Hoof, the war chief of the Shawnees, and One-Who-Carries-the-Knife, chief of the Wyandots, would be in attendance.

"Only chiefs and leading men are to meet the Black Panther tonight," concluded the warrior.

Boone made no answer. He feared Black Hoof, his old enemy, might recognize him despite his make-up. But it was a night for heroics, and with fair Kentucky as the prize he only asked of Fate to be permitted to get within striking distance of the Painter. He halted to tie his moccasin, and his companion pressed on, saying they would be late. The fire burned in a forest glade directly ahead and the pioneer held back until he believed all the warriors had assembled. Then he stalked to the end of a semi-circle and squatted in front of a clump of bushes.

His arrival was not noticed as Black Hoof was addressing the Painter. The latter sat beside his drum, listening intently to the veiled arraignment of the chief. With diplomatic moderation Black Hoof briefly enumerated the various setbacks experienced by his people since they listened to the advice of the Painter, and in concluding his summary said:

"We know the medicine of the Panther's Drum is mighty. The poor Indians bow in fear before it. But my people are tired. They think much of their homes above the Ohio. They are hungry to go back to their salt-boiling. They would know when the medicine of the Drum will kill the whites, and how long shall the Big Turtle and the Tall Hunter come and go like songbirds with no one to stop them. The ears of the Indians are open for the Panther's words of wisdom to enter."

Several minutes of silence elapsed, then the Painter threw back his head and sounded his panther cry. Leaping erect he shouted:

"My medicine sent my ax flying from the forest to the stockade of the fort. A brave chief asks when will the Drum begin killing. The Drum says for Shawnees and Wyandots to go after my ax *now*. If this is done the red fires in the east shall see my red brothers dancing the scalps of Harrodstown. The Panther will be the first over the stockade, following his ax. Who follows him? Who follows him now? Ha!"

The Indians had forgotten their uneasiness of spirit and were on their feet, brandishing their medicine and sounding their war-whoops, and the Painter fell to beating the drum. Boone also rose, unobserved by any of the excited throng, and stepped back until waist-deep in the bushes. He swung the heavy ax until familiar with its balance, and, as the warriors surged forward, he hurled it with all his might. With a gasp of horror the advancing braves glared at the terrible climax—the medicine-man and prophet prostrate over his drum, his head split from crown to mouth.

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"Killed by his own ax! Killed by his own false medicine, just as the red men will die if they listen to the Drum!" shouted Boone.

The warriors remained stupefied as Boone softly backed into the forest. Then two rifles spoke in rapid succession from the opposite side of the glade and two warriors went down.

"WHY didn't ye do as ye said ye would?" panted Boone as Kenton joined him and handed him his rifle and powder-horn.

"I said you'd pick me up when you struck out for home. You have," defended Kenton. "Think you was to have all the fun? I did a good job."

"We'll see," was the dubious response. "They was reckon' that the Painter's medicine killed him by fetchin' his own ax back from the fort. They was skeered. But they must 'a' suspected white men's work when ye fired th' rifles. I opine ye sorter sp'iled the spell. Hear that howl? I thought as much. Black Hoof ain't no fool. He's combin' the woods for us."

FOR thirty-six hours the pioneers had dodged and run with the Indians, driving them toward Boonesborough. More than a score of Shawnees and Wyandots were at their heels when they wearily staggered into the clearing before the front of the fort. Reckless in their hate the Indians dashed into the opening, thinking to dispatch their victims under the very walls of the fort. But now the gate swung open and a dozen men, led by Gutherie, swarmed out in skirmish formation. Boone and Kenton shook off their weariness and turned and brought their rifles into play. Two of the whites dropped and the little line gave back. Kenton, who had shot one Indian, sprang forward to prevent the enemy from capturing the bodies, and became the center of a savage assault.

Boone fired with deadly effect and advanced to help his friend. By a furious effort Kenton secured room for knife-play and killed two of his assailants. The others gave ground for a moment and sprang toward Boone, just as the latter went down with a broken leg. Throwing him over his shoulder Kenton carried him to the gate and returned to the fight. He was the last of the little band to retreat within the stockade.

"How do you feel, Dan'l?" asked Kenton from the cabin door after Boone's injury had been attended to.

"Much obleeged to ye for botherin' to tote me in," replied Boone.

"I didn't mean that," growled Kenton.

"Then I feel like laffin' to think how the Painter's medicine ain't worth a cuss in these parts no more." Then very gravely, "I wonder if there'll ever come a time when Cantuck can plant corn without bein' sculped."

Had his medicine been prophetic he would have visioned that time fast approaching. Only, before it could arrive he was destined to pass through the greatest climax of his eventful career.

IV

BOONE'S leg mended rapidly; and as the Indians wearied of harassing the forts and turned to hunting out the isolated cabins of "improvers," who had failed to break through to the fortified posts, his convalescence was marked by no unusual alarms. The first day he was able to be about Kenton pronounced the fort safe from any immediate sttack, and seized the opportunity to depart on a long scout to the west and south. The settlers began venturing forth to bag small game.

Under Boone's direction the aged and very young picked up many pounds of flattened bullets outside the stockade. With the supply of lead thus augmented Boone only had to make gunpowder to insure enough ammunition for the Winter. This left food as the vital problem, to provide which the garrison must have salt. Boone's decision to risk a trip to some salt-lick on the Licking River was hastened by the unexpected arrival of settlers from the Watauga, bringing a large number of much-needed boiling-kettles. Coincident with this timely reinforcement there came word from Kenton that there remained only a few Indians in Kentucky. Taking thirty men and some pack-animals loaded with kettles Boone led the way to the lower Blue Lick.

Now that the bulk of the Indians had retired to their villages beyond the Ohio the settlers anticipated no more raids until Spring. It was with his customary caution, however, that Boone set about the

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salt-making, allowing but half his band to tend the kettles with the others scouting the woods and standing guard. As rapidly as a quantity of salt was obtained it was sent to Boonesborough by four men. As the licks were much sought by game, meat could easily be had for the shooting.

Several weeks were spent in this pleasant fashion and the old year and its alarms and troubles became a sealed chapter. One morning, near the middle of January, Boone announced to the men:

"We'll boil off one more mess an' be goin'. That'll give us 'nough for a year. We'll start for home in three days. As ye won't need me I'll take a pack-horse an' scout up toward the Ohio an' pick up a buf'ler."

"I can smell snow, Dan'l," warned Gutherie. "Ye can't see nothin' if it snows."

"I can see buf'ler. If it snows all the more chance there won't be any Injuns snoopin' 'round."

With that he struck off due north into the frost-burned woods, leading a pack-horse. As he had anticipated he came upon a small herd of buffaloes about ten miles from camp and shot a cow. By the time he had dressed it out and packed the meat it was snowing, and his field of vision was reduced to a distance of a few rods.

Abandoning his plan to scout in a wide detour he took the back track, and was stumbling along, half-blinded by the storm, when he was jumped by four Shawnee Indians. Dropping the halter he leaped into a thicket and commenced dodging from tree to tree. As the Indians gained on him he wheeled and snapped his rifle, only to find the snow had soaked the priming. Throwing the gun aside he drew his ax, but before he could use it several Indians leaped upon him from behind and quickly made him prisoner.

Wildly exultant at having captured Big Turtle without losing a warrior his captors hurried him through the woods to the bank of a creek, where he was dismayed to behold a camp of a hundred savages. To punctuate the climax of his misfortune two white men ran forward to meet him.

"Dan'l Boone, by the 'tarnal!" yelled one.

"Of all the luck! We heard a shot but never dreamed it could be our old friend, Dan'l, comin' to be roasted," rejoiced the other.

"I'd ruther be Dan'l Boone, roasted to a crisp at a Shawnee stake, then to be either Jim, or George Girty, brothers of that yaller dawg, Simon Girty, the 'white Injun,'" growled Boone, his blue eyes blazing at the Girty brothers.

"Wait till brother Simon comes along an' ye'll beg his pardon on the raw stumps of yer legs," chuckled George Girty.

Further threats and defiances were now shut off by a swarm of Indians emerging from the temporary shelters of bark and boughs. The Shawnees could scarcely credit their great luck. Among them were several who had captured Boone eight years before, and these, with boisterous pretenses of good will, welcomed him as a long-lost friend, patting his shoulders and rubbing his cheeks in a mockery of affection.

This sinister play was continued until interrupted by the arrival of a stalwart savage, who, despite the whistling storm, was naked to the loins. After one glance Boone's natural optimism began to reassert itself. Instead of Black Hoof, who owed him many a grudge and who was the principal chief of the Shawnee Nation at that time, the newcomer was Black Fish, chief and famous warrior, but whose hatred for the prisoner would lack a personal bias; for it had not been given to Boone to thwart him as he had foiled the Hoof.

Nevertheless, under the most favorable construction, the prisoner's fate seemed fixed. There was something deadly ominous in the grave greeting:

"The Big Turtle is very fond of his red brothers. He comes through the cold and storm to warm himself at their fires."

The Girtys snorted loudly in appreciation; the Indians glared in lively anticipation.

"Big Turtle knew the Shawnees must be weary and hungry and unable to shoot game. So he brought them meat," replied Boone, pointing to the pack-horse.

"We will cook the Turtle and his game in the same pot," declared James Girty.

Black Fish turned on the speaker slowly, his gaze cold and hard, and haughtily reminded:

"The Shawnee Nation can manage its own business. The Big Turtle has friends near. The smoke of the camp-fire is still in his hair." Then wetting a finger he passed it over the encrustations on the prisoner's shirt and tasted, and said, "He has been

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making salt. He shall eat some of the meat he has brought to the Shawnees; then he shall lead us to where his men are camped."

The chief's shrewd deductions were instantly accepted. The Girtys were chagrined that they had not been the first to guess the truth. George brazenly said:

"We know there is a camp. We can find it when we want it. But first we must go and take Boonesborough. On our way back we can wipe out the camp."

"Boonesborough is what we started for," reminded James. "These salt-makers will stay in camp, waiting for Big Turtle to return. After we've taken the fort we will dance their scalps."

"The white men's ears are filled with snow," jeered the chief. "They did not hear the words of the Black Fish. But the Shawnees have heard, and know he has spoken."

Without further speech he stalked back to his shelter of bark, leaving the renegades livid with rage.

Boone was quick to understand their anger. The war-party was on its way to surprise Boonesborough. The Girtys knew that should the Indians be diverted from this objective they were very likely to abandon it. By the time the warriors had led him to a log before a roaring fire he had arrived at five conclusions: the band would not attack Boonesborough should they capture more than a score of whites; if they took his friends prisoners without a fight there would be no immediate bloodshed; if captured without a fight they would be taken to some Shawnee village, and then to Detroit to be ransomed by the British lieutenant-governor, Henry Hamilton; the camp was sure to be located and captured; if any warriors were killed, some, if not all the surviving whites would be put to the torture on the spot.

Meat was set before him as he pondered over the momentous decision he knew he must soon make. From the chief's shack came the sound of the Girtys' voices loud in an argument. Boone was satisfied the renegades feared the expedition against the fort was to be abandoned. Taking the war-path was purely a voluntary matter. Any brave could return home at will and lose no caste by doing so. A large number of prisoners always was an impelling reason why the trip home should be made immediately, regardless of the original plans. As Boone devoured his half-cooked venison the white men backed precipitately from the shack. Black Fish followed them, his little eyes glittering wrathfully.

"If only Simon was here!" groaned James.

"If Simon came here and saw me he would turn and run like a rabbit," boldly cried Boone in the Shawnee tongue.

This speech amused the warriors; the chief gave a little grunt which might mean approval. Black Fish strode to the log and seated himself beside Boone and studied him curiously. It was his first close view of the man whose courage and cunning had made him respected and feared by every Indian tribe frequenting Kentucky. For eight years Boone had fought a duel with Northern and Southern Indians, tenaciously clinging to Kentucky in face of overwhelming odds.

After a long silence the chief curtly declared—

"The Big Turtle will lead the Shawnees to his camp and tell his men to throw down their guns."

"My men are many and well armed, and have eyes like the eagle. Why should they throw down their arms? If they must die it is better to die quickly by bullet or ax, taking many Shawnees with them on the trail to the western stars, than to be tied to a stake for those dogs, neither white nor red, to torment."

"If no Shawnee blood is spilled they shall be taken to Detroit, where the Big Chief (Lieutenant-Governor Henry Hamilton) will ransom them," promised the Fish.

"The name of Black Fish is known whereever white men make their homes. His voice is heard over the mountains, for he speaks with a straight tongue. Big Turtle knows it is good medicine that sends him a prisoner to the mighty Fish."

The strong features relaxed none under this flattery but the chief could not entirely conceal the pride lighting his beady eyes.

"The Big Turtle is a man," he simply retorted. "Will he lead the way to the camp?"

"I can lead the Shawnees to the camp," broke in James Girty.

"The wind blows. Words come and go with the wind," rebuked the chief.

James bit his lips in rage. Boone bolted a piece of meat and made his decision. The camp was doomed in any event. If taken

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without a fight the savages would hasten back home, and Boonesborough would be spared. Hamilton's liberal offer of ransom for all prisoners must result in the settlers being taken to Detroit.

"I will lead the Fish to the camp and tell my brothers to throw down their arms," he promised.

OUT of the swirl of the storm stepped Boone and shouted loudly. Gutherie was the first to see him, and noticed he was unarmed.

"Tell the men I'm a prisoner of a hundred Shawnees, Gutherie, an' that I advise 'em to give up without a fight," yelled Boone, above the roar of the wind. "Ye can't escape. If ye don't make a fight I don't opine any one will be hurt. The reds are aimin' to surprise Boonesborough. If ye give in they'll quit an' go home."

"Ye think we'd best knuckle under without a fight, Dan'l?"

"I do. If ye fight an' kill some of 'em they'll torture all of ye that's left, an', havin' no prisoners to bother with, they'll go on an' smash the fort sure's shootin'. Black Fish promises ye shall be ransomed at Detroit."

Gutherie, a tried veteran in Indian warfare, agreed with this reasoning, and talked hurriedly with the men. Then he called back:

"We've quit, Dan'l. Tell the red devils we give in without a kick."

Boone interpreted this to the chief, and at the latter's command the rifles were deposited in a heap and the men drew back. The warriors rushed in and tied the prisoners' hands behind their backs. Such a bag of captives seldom fell to the lot of any war-party, and when it was made without the loss of a single life the warriors were justified in giving the wildest demonstrations of joy.

Whooping and singing the all-conquering spirit of their people, they danced frantically 'round the salt-makers, but offered them no hurt. Boone had looked for just such an exhibition and it disturbed him none; but when the Girtys began circulating among the braves, and whispering a word in this ear and that, he became anxious.

"Black Fish is so great a warrior he does not need to speak with a crooked tongue," said Boone to the chief, who was struggling hard to conceal his great pride beneath racial stoicism. "My white men are brave. They could have fought and killed many Shawnees. But I told them the words of the Fish—that they would be ransomed at Detroit. Now, two men, neither red nor white, are whispering like evil birds and telling your young men to dance some of the scalps."

Black Fish turned and strode away as though not hearing the speaker, and as if he abandoned the captives to the caprice of their captors. Outside the screeching circle he halted, however, and loudly proclaimed:

"Pack the white men's meat and salt on the horses. We must show our prisoners to our brothers at Chillicothe."

This appealed to the savage vanity. It whetted their eagerness to return to their snug lodges, singing their prowess. Also, was that other picture of the rum and trade goods awaiting them at Detroit. The Girtys, furious as demons, broke bounds, and George commenced screaming:

"There are many times these men waiting for your axes at Boonesborough. Never again will you have such a chance. The fort can be taken in one rush. Then you can go to Chillicothe with all the whites on the Kentucky. My medicine tells me"——

"It tells you lies, you hanger-on of Indian camps!" thundered Boone. "Simon Kenton, with a hundred riflemen, has arrived at Boonesborough from the Watauga. They came before I led my men to the Licking."

The Girtys did not believe this misstatement and were enraged to observe the Indians accepting it as truth. With a yell, George Girty rushed at Boone with uplifted ax. Boone met the onslaught with steady gaze. No one interfered until the ax began its downward arc, when Black Fish seized the renegade's wrist and hurled him aside. James Girty snatched a bow and arrow from a warrior and almost at the same moment a savage reached forward and cut the string with his scalping-knife.

"Reckon ye won, Dan'l," mumbled Gutherie.

Black Fish raised a hand for silence, and warned:

"The Shawnees heard my words to Big Turtle, that no scalps should be danced. Let no prisoner wander aside and become lost, or escape. If one is missing when we

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get to Chillicothe my medicine says a man called Girty shall go to the stake to straighten out my tongue. I have said it."

Under this threat the Girtys subsided and made no further effort to incite a massacre. Returning to the camp in the woods preparations were commenced for the return trip to the Shawnee village on the Little Miami. Boonesborough was safe for the Winter. Morning broke with the storm raging more fiercely than ever, and the cold was intense. Progress was slow and the limited supply of meat was soon exhausted. Scarcely any game was sighted, and by the time the Ohio was reached all the food had been consumed. Crossing the river the raiders commenced eating their dogs, then their horses.

Boone continually reminded Black Fish of the royal ransom Hamilton would be glad to pay; and impelled by their lust for the lieutenant-governor's bounty the Indians shared their rations liberally with the captives. The long journey through the wilderness in howling storms was only a prelude to further sufferings, as the settlers were soon to learn.

On reaching Chillicothe the prisoners indulged in the luxury of warmth and plenty of food. Boone was the first to discover the crisis ahead of them. It emanated from the Girtys, who were inflamed with rage at the fiasco of the expedition against the fort. They were determined to eliminate the captives as a deterrent to the next foray against Boonesborough. They commenced their work by passing from lodge to lodge and urging the prisoners be put to the torture.

They dared to do this, for in Chillicothe the Fish was but one of many notable leaders. Jealousy, too, was there; and while the Fish might be supreme when leading a war-party, he was sure to meet with opposition at home. The renegades' campaign quickly found a response among those who had not participated in the glory of the capture.

As early as the second day after their arrival the chief entered the lodge occupied by Boone, Gutherie and several others, and gloomily informed—

"The tongue of the Fish is straight, but his medicine may be thrown down by stronger medicine. He has said the white men should be ransomed at Detroit. Black Hoof sends word by a runner that he comes to hold a council to see what shall be done with the white men."

Boone had been expecting some such evil news and had feared Black Hoof would put in an appearance and override the promise given by the Fish. He sternly reminded:

"The medicine of the Fish is mighty, or he could not have captured so many whites without losing a warrior. His medicine is stronger than that of the Hoof, for where are the prisoners taken by the Hoof? The Fish will not bag game and then stand aside and see another eat it. If the white men are not taken to Detroit the medicine of Black Fish will wither and fade, and warriors will laugh at him when he speaks of the war-path."

Without a word the chief took his departure.

"Pretty good Injun as the critters go," mused Boone, gazing after him. "He's fussed up at the chance the council may make him out a liar. It's the work of them dirty Girtys! They've been stirrin' up the braves an' tellin' 'em they oughter dance our sculps. Now the Fish has warned us what may happen he'll git busy among his friends. He's got a strong follerin'. If the Girtys don't git hold of some rum I opine he'll carry the day. The Hoof hates me like p'izen, but he's an old fox an' won't want to take sides ag'in the Fish openly unless he sees he has the whole outfit with him. He hates to be numbered among losers, as that will weaken him with the Injuns.

"Now, men, don't reckon everything depends on the Fish. Ye must git to work. Act bold, but don't go lookin' for a fight. Be good-natured, but don't eat any crow-pie. Injuns like pleasant folks, so make 'em laff. They're back home an' well fed; that's in our favor. They love their women an' younkers; whittle out toys for the younkers an' make a fuss about 'em. Keep askin' the braves how much rum an' goods Hamilton will give for us. Ask the women how much red cloth they'll git out of the deal. I'll trail the Fish an' keep him up to the scratch. Lord, wish they'd hold their doggone council afore the Hoof an' more new Injuns git here."

It was impossible to exaggerate the renegades' malevolence. They were whipped on by a twofold incentive; their hatred for Boone, who had spoiled so many of their plans; and their natural belief that there could be no more raids against the Kentucky

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forts until the prisoners had been disposed of. To convey the prisoners to Detroit would require a large force of savages; those remaining at Chillicothe would not take the war-path until their brothers had returned with the ransom, in which all would share.

AS BOONE was following Black Fish and was passing the long council house he came face to face with the Girtys. They were walking side by side, and he saw they intended to hold the path against him and crowd him into the deep snow. He was diplomatic enough to submit to petty abuse rather than endanger his main chance, and decided to give way and let them pass. As he was on the point of putting his decision into action he saw several warriors were watching him closely, seeking a sign of weakness. The pendulum of his resolution instantly swung to the opposite extreme. Halting before the two ruffians he planted himself squarely and surveyed them contemptuously. Before either could speak he called out in Shawnee:

"I was born in Pennsylvania. I never was ashamed of it till I learned three yapping dogs, called Girty, came from there. You are no good."

And he accompanied his words with an Indian gesture for contempt, by bringing his finger against his thumb and snapping them out as he flung forth his hand, brushing George Girty's face. To heighten the insult he turned and gazed to one side.

Mouthing oaths George sprang upon him, whereat the pioneer reversed his position like a cat and caught the renegade by crotch and crop and tossed him through the opening of a lodge. A squaw inside shrieked wrathfully at the unexpected intrusion, and Jim Girty drew his knife and picked up the fight. With a jerk of his left arm Boone whipped the folds of his blanket about it and caught the point of the knife, and swept it aside, at the same moment delivering a smash with his right fist that hurled his assailant into a snow-bank, where he remained very quiet.

Re-arranging his blanket he turned to the watchful Shawnees and blandly observed:

"The Shawnees should keep their dogs where they belong."

The warriors' faces twitched with amusement, the spectacle of George vanishing into the lodge especially appealing to their sense of the humorous. Beneath their amusement was born a new respect for the prisoner. Courage was the one attribute they paid homage to, whether it be displayed by friend or foe.

Boone was pluming himself on the wholesome impression he had made when a cold voice behind him brought him to stiff attention.

"The Big Turtle takes the war-path even in Chillicothe and allows no warriors to pass," came over his shoulder.

He slowly faced about and beheld Black Hoof. Behind him stood the Fish, his countenance imperturbable.

"Big Turtle finds only the smooth path of friendship in the Shawnee village and gladly gives room to all mighty chiefs and warriors, and stands firm only when those who are neither white nor red face him," retorted Boone, stepping from the path.

For a few moments the Hoof stared at him steadily, a glimmer of admiration peeping from his black eyes; then he, too, stepped from the path, not to be outdone in courtesy. Circling Boone by wading to his knees he paused before George Girty, now emerging from the lodge, and coldly reminded:

"The Shawnee Nation disposes of its prisoners in the council. Until then they are to be well fed and well treated. The Black Hoof is speaking."

On he swept with the Fish at his heels.

The Girtys slunk away and Boone returned to report to his friends. Already they had followed his advice. Some were carving canoes and knives from cedar for the Indian boys. Others had endeavored to converse with taciturn braves, while the sparkling glances of various young squaws evidenced their dreams of much red cloth.

Boone told his experience and began visiting the lodges, entering at will. He questioned withered hags about sons lost in battle, and never failed to pay high tribute to the deceased. Or, accosting a sullen warrior he would refer to some battle, and expressed great admiration for the part the red man had played. To many he spoke of Braddock's defeat, and marveled at the bravery and astuteness displayed on that occasion by the Black Hoof.

Undoubtedly Boone had few, if any, rivals in the art of gaining the good-will of an enemy. With adroit flattery, never to be suspected in one so simple and guileless

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under ordinary conditions, he could leave a good impression even upon those who had thirsted for his blood. Other borderers, greater offensive fighters, such as George Rogers Clark, or more reckless in risks run, such as young Simon Kenton, were held in great fear and high respect by the Indians. Yet these types lacked a quality which made Boone unique in his day and environment, an uncanny knack of ingratiating himself into the good-will of those planning his destruction.

This was merely another phase, embroidered, of the law of self-defense. Men of the Clark or Kenton mold would have been considered by the savages as being weak of heart did they endeavor to placate their captors. Yet Boone could dull the edge of hatred without sacrificing a foe's esteem for him as a fighter. His ability to do this suggested a hypnotic personality.

Late in the afternoon of the fourth day Gutherie hastened to Boone and informed:

"Looks bad. The Girtys have begun peddlin' rum. I've seen more'n one brave that's drunk for our blood."

"That means the council will be held tonight. They wouldn't hand out any rum ahead of time. Say nothin' to the men, or they might act worried an' the Injuns would think we was losin' heart. Keep on actin' like ye was glad to be here."

"Be ye goin' to the council?"

"If I can git in. When it opens keep the men bunched an' ready to grab weapons an' make a break for the woods if ye hear me give the word. Some of ye will win clear. Anyway, death fightin' is better'n the stake. Keep up their spunk. I'll be the last to run to cover. If I go under I hope the men won't feel hard ag'in me."

"Lawd, no, Dan'l! The wolves would 'a' been fightin' over our bones at th' salt lick afore now if we'd put up a fight. An', 'as ye said, it's all for Kentucky."

BOONE submitted good-naturedly when his first attempt to enter the council house was rudely repulsed. But later, when he saw the two Girtys, inflamed with drink, pass into the long log structure he caught the guard by the shoulder and shoved him aside, loudly demanding—

"Do the Shawnees keep a man out and let dogs enter?"

Waiting a moment for the rhetorical effect of his query to register he pushed his way into the smoke-filled room and gazed composedly about. Wicked little eyes watched his every movement. The Girtys started to object to his presence, but the Black Fish said something that caused them to desist. It was the Black Hoof who motioned for the intruder to be seated on a robe in the inside circle.

After a decorous period of silence, Black Fish rose and tersely narrated the circumstances attending the wholesale capture of the settlers. Next he painted the joy of Hamilton on receiving the prisoners, and the resulting benefits of the big ransom. The nation would receive an extraordinary amount of goods and rum. While he was speaking, Boone counted the warriors and found one hundred and twenty-one were present. More than a score of these were wild-eyed from drink, and their ferocious gaze warned him how their votes would be cast.

For nearly ten minutes after the Fish finished no one moved; then James Girty nudged a warrior of the Panther clan. He rose and spoke for the opposition. At the outset he denied that a leader of a war-party could bind the nation as to its policy in disposing of prisoners. With a wealth of invective he pictured the ruin brought to Kentucky by Boone and his kind. He insisted that should the Shawnee Nation ransom its captives it would mean they had exchanged their hunting-grounds for rum and goods.

Already, he truthfully reminded, the buffalo was receding to the Mississippi and soon would be found only west of that mighty river. There was but one medicine to bring them back; black smoke curling above white bones. Whereas the speech of the Fish had been received in silence this speaker was applauded with a chorus of "*Ho! ho!*"

After another interval of silence a second advocate for the torture harangued the council. With much cunning he played upon the blood-lust of his hearers, enumerating various curious devices for inflicting the most exquisite pain. Then pitching his voice high, that it might carry to the women crouching in the snow and darkness outside, he called a roll of Shawnee warriors killed by the whites, and demanded how long their bones should "remain uncovered." In a dramatic climax he pointed

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north, where the Northern Lights streamed high and sank low, and cried:

"The ghosts of our dead dance in the cold sky, waiting for you to take revenge so they may go their way in peace to the spirit land where hides the sun at night. Listen! You can hear them whistling."

He paused, and there came a shrill, tremulous whistle, such as ghosts were supposed to make and which Boone knew had been staged by the Girtys. The council stirred uneasily. The gaze of Black Hoof grew malignant. The speaker was not applauded, but the bearing of his auditors was more ominous than any thunder of approval. Boone knew the Fish was losing his fight to make good his promise.

Black Hoof now rose and dropped his blanket to his loins and stared intently at Boone. His speech was laconic, but it carried a death-sentence for the prisoners. He simply said—

"The bones of our dead must be covered."

James Girty, unbalanced by his potations, leaped to his feet although present only as a looker-on, and uninvited, proceeded to violate Indian etiquette by boastfully promising:

"The bones of our dead shall be covered so deep they shall rest in peace. I have made a shirt from the white man's iron which we will heat red and put on the Big Turtle. And I will make me a shirt out of his hide and wear it when we go against the Kentucky settlements, and it shall be big medicine, and no Shawnee shall fall."

With this drunken intrusion he collapsed in a heap.

Boone shot an impelling glance at the Fish, who sought to evade it. But the boring insistence of the blue eyes could not be ignored, and at last the chief rose and said:

"A white man, unasked, has addressed the council of the Shawnees, and has said, 'our dead.' There is another white man here, who, my medicine tells me, wishes to speak. If the Big Turtle would speak the Fish asks that he be heard."

There ensued a deathly silence, each warrior staring at his feet but with curious side glances at the pioneer. Boone glared scornfully 'round the assemblage, as though convinced they were afraid to hear him. He caught the eye of the Hoof and sent him a challenge. The Hoof grew uneasy and imagined the warriors were watching him and wondering if he feared the white man's words. Finally he surrendered, and nodded to Boone to follow his inclination. Boone stood up and began:

"The Shawnee Nation takes white men to live with it—men like those." And he pointed scornfully at the Girtys. "When the Shawnee people take real men to live with them they will grow great and strong and hold their land. The Big Turtle has fought the Shawnees and their friends for many years. He is tired of war. He loves this country of the red men, or he would not come to Kentucky to live. He could have stayed back on the Yadkin.

"Keep that dog's iron jacket for the real enemies of the Shawnees. Do not use it on those who have fought bravely against the Nation and have surrendered because they believed the Shawnees spoke with straight tongues. Take the Big Turtle as one of your children. His medicine tells him how to make black powder. Can either of those dogs make powder? Is there a Shawnee here who knows the truth and will speak it? Can Big Turtle make black powder?"

He waited half a minute, a full minute; then a warrior wearing the totem of the Raccoon on his breast, stood up and gravely said:

"The Big Turtle speaks true. Little Paws of the Shapata clan, while a prisoner among the whites, saw the Turtle make powder out of earth."

Boone instantly sensed the strong impression this point made, and was quick to follow it up by asking:

"What will stregthen the Shawness the most; our bones worried by wolves in the snow, or an adopted brother who can make powder until you can laugh at the traders? What makes other Indian nations strong? The bones of those put to the torture, or the powder they get from the whites? Are the Shawnees foolish men, walking in circles like blind men, not to know this?"

The warriors swayed back and forth, and George Girty knew Boone stood a chance of winning his life, and would have interrupted had not Black Hoof imperiously gestured for him to keep silent. Boone spoke a few words more and sat down well contented with his efforts. The Hoof stood up and said:

"The Turtle speaks wise words. He can make powder for us. Perhaps if all the others, or some of them, are sent to the stake the ghosts will stop whistling. My brothers will now vote."

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It had become a matter of life or death for his friends and Boone could not pause to weigh ceremony. Springing to his feet he cried out:

"Listen to my last words. Unless all the prisoners are ransomed at Detroit you will get no powder from the Turtle. If one prisoner is killed, then kill the Turtle with him. If the Shawnees will trade a strength such as no nation ever had for the bones of dead men, let them begin with me. After a sleep they will wake up and rub their eyes and say: 'What fools we have been! We have traded strength for dead bones.' No ghosts have whistled 'round this council house tonight. Those dogs gave an Indian rum to stay outside and whistle. The Turtle can make ghosts of that kind whistle, also."

And pursing his lips he sounded an eery, quavering whistle that floated from end to end of the council-house, seemingly to hang high above the heads of the warriors. Then he challenged:

"Send men to drive every one away from the outside of the house and then ask these dogs to make their ghosts to whistle. They play tricks on the warriors of the Shawnee Nation."

As he sat down, angry glances were darted at the Girtys. Not daring to come to an open break with the two renegades by putting them to the test suggested by Boone, and being anxious to end the tense drama, Black Hoof announced:

"The Big Turtle says he must walk the trail of his friends. Let it be so. All stand who are for the stake for all the whites."

Boone could not make the count with exactness, but believed the Girtys and their faction had won out. He was preparing to make a dash for the door when those favoring ransom for all stood up. He decided he had a fighting chance, although the vote must be very close. The Fish was standing, the Hoof was seated. But after the Hoof had finished the count he rose and announced he was voting for ransom. Then Boone knew he had won and that the Hoof had withheld his decision until he could pick the majority. The closeness of the vote, however, was unnerving.

Leaving the council-house and hastening to his lodge he called out:

"Tell the boys to keep on whittlin', Gutherie. We keep our sculps by two votes. It was fifty-nine for torture an' sixty-one for ransom."

THE long arduous trip to Detroit was finally accomplished and the salt-makers at last emerged from the great shadow. Camp was pitched some distance from the fort with Black Fish in command. As the chief was preparing to take small groups of the prisoners to Hamilton, Boone said in final warning:

"Make Hamilton think ye're glad to be here an' through with fightin'. Act anxious to be raisin' crops among the Canadians. Let him think ye'd be perfectly satisfied if yer famblies could j'in ye after the war's over. An' then let on how all this sort of depends on my stayin' here with ye."

"We'll do it, Dan'l. But ain't ye goin' to make believe ye want to stay here?" said Gutherie.

"If I git the chance. But I've made myself so dog-gone pop'lar with the Shawnees that Black Fish says they've decided to keep me. He's jest fetched me along to prove to Hamilton that he really caught me. I played it so strong at the council that I seem to have cooked my own goose. The Injuns reckon on my makin' powder for 'em."

"Gorrymighty, Dan'l! He can't hold ye! Hamilton will ransom ye. No redskin can stand out ag'in a fat ransom of rum an' red cloth. Why didn't ye tell us 'bout this so we could make a break on the way up.

"So ye wouldn't try anything so foolish as makin' a break. The Injuns may change their minds—but I opine not."

Three days later Boone was convinced the Shawnees would not change their mind. All his friends had appeared before Hamilton and had emerged from the fort free men so far as the Shawnees were concerned. All this time Boone had been held in camp. Outwardly in the best of spirits and fast winning favor among the savages by his readiness to slough off the white man's way and adapt himself to the Indian mode of living, the pioneer, nevertheless, spent many anxious hours seeking to learn his fate.

The fact remained he had "played it too strong" at the council in Chillicothe in order to save his friends. He could not undo that dissimulation without paying a fearful penalty. To disarm all suspicions he appeared to avoid his friends. On the morning of the fourth day, the Indians began packing their ransom stores for a return to the Miami. Boone displayed great willingness to aid in this work and soon convinced the Indians

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they had much to learn from him when it came to adjusting a load to a pack-horse.

It was while thus engaged that Gutherie entered the camp and hurriedly informed:

"He's askin' for ye. I told him ye was here. He didn't believe it at first, seein' ye ain't been brought in. He's tickled to death to know ye're caught. I let on ye planned the whole thing to git clear of Kentucky—God forgive me—an' live up here in peace. He's half swallered it an' says he must see ye."

The Indians did not understand but listened suspiciously. Boone refrained from looking at his old friend and continued his work of packing. As Gutherie finished, Boone grunted impatiently and motioned for him to leave. The savage visage of Black Fish cleared up as he saw the old man virtually driven from the camp, and in passing Boone he patted his shoulder. Either to test his prisoner further, or because he knew Hamilton would demand an audience with the pioneer he proceeded to hint that they might visit the fort during the day.

With a shrug of his shoulders, Boone slapped several bales of red cloth on a horse, and over his shoulder replied:

"Why go to the Englishman? They are white men. Big Turtle is turning red."

The chief's eyes glittered with triumph.

An hour later a Wyandot came as interpreter for two soldiers, who said the Big Chief had counted the prisoners and found one was missing. He wished that one to be brought before him at once that he might question him, as he had the others, concerning Kentucky. Boone heard this with a sullen face and drew his blanket over his head as additional proof the message was unwelcome. Black Fish deliberated, then beckoned to Boone to follow him.

Entering the fort, captor and captive were at once escorted to Hamilton's quarters, and for a good, long minute the commander and the pioneer studied each other in silence while the Fish squatted by the door and watched the two closely.

"You are the man called Boone, who has caused his Majesty's forces much trouble," Hamilton began, frowning heavily.

"I've caused myself a heap of trouble, too," grumbled Boone. "An' I've got mighty small thanks for it."

Hamilton eyed him sharply, and remarked—

"Your men seem willing to remain here and take up land."

"That's human natur'. It's peaceful an' quiet here. The Injuns are friendly. Down in Cantuck it's jest one fight after another. If they had their famblies with 'em—But they can do their own talkin'."

"It's been my pleasure to take them off the Indians' hands," graciously continued Hamilton. "Of course they must remain here until after the war. Do you wish to go back to Kentucky?"

The query was plumped smartly, as though coming from ambush, and the commander leaned forward to see the effect.

"A home in Cantuck ain't possible till peace comes," was the honest reply.

The commander interpreted it to his own liking, however, and with a low laugh remarked—

"Scarcely the talk of a 'patriot rebel.' "

Boone's jaws clamped together and his blue eyes flashed. With a fine show of indignation he bitterly retorted:

"What have the Colonies done for Cantuck? When have they sent help to us? Ever since last Spring we've been cooped up in our forts. Harrodstown has been besieged three times, Boonesborough twice. That means we've been hemmed in behind stockades almost every day since the new leaves come more'n a year ago. Cantuck's been left to shift for herself. What good does all this fightin' in Pennsylvania an' New York do us in Cantuck? Me an' my neighbors want a chance to plant corn an' raise our children."

Hamilton was unable to conceal his satisfaction. Boone's words more than confirmed the hints dropped by Gutherie.

"Why, my man, you talk like a good Tory," he commended.

"Tory's jest a word—a name. What matters a name? I opine we folks along the Cantuck ain't thin-skinned as to what we're called so long as we can live in peace an' keep our ha'r. Yes; if wantin' to live without fightin' is bein' a Tory I reckon I'm a mighty good one. I want to live where my fambly won't be sculped."

"I can arrange safe passage for your family," assured Hamilton. "Now, Boone—and we must be brief as the chief is growing suspicious—why haven't you been brought in for ransom?"

"We must act real mad. I seem to be sort of a pet with the Shawnee Nation,"

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Boone said defiantly and with an ugly scowl, for Black Fish was a past master in reading tone value.

"I'll remedy that. I'll ransom you," coldly retorted Hamilton. Then to the chief, "Black Fish, my red brother, son of the Great Father across the big water, what price do you put on this white man called Big Turtle?"

The Shawnee rose and with much dignity replied:

"There is no white man called the Big Turtle. There is a man of that name who is half white and half red. A few sleeps ago he was all white. A few sleeps from now he will be all red. The Shawnees do not sell their brothers."

Hamilton grimaced to indicate a personal indifference and explained:

"I do not want him, but your Great Father has sent word for the Turtle to live here at Detroit. Call fifty of your strongest warriors and let each carry all he can of rum, powder, lead and cloth to your camp. It is too much to pay, but I must obey my Great Father."

The chief's gaze glittered with avarice. It was such a trade as none in the nation had ever made, not even Black Hoof himself. But he remembered the white man's magic and the vote of the council to retain the prisoner. Doubtless the Great Father wanted the Turtle to make powder for him.

"Black Fish does not sell his *own son*," he answered.

Boone's hopes vanished. It was the first intimation that he was to be adopted into the tribe as the son of his captor. Once that was done it would be a long cry and a hard trail to Kentucky.

Hamilton's face grew stern. He, too, sensed the gravity of the situation; and his only weapon was barter. To retain Boone in the fort against the wishes of the chief would be to alienate all the Indians in Ohio and many about Detroit. Rising he told the two to follow him. Escorted by several armed soldiers he led the way to the storehouse and opened the door and invited Black Fish to look within.

With a gasp of amazement the chief stared at the tiers of boxes and barrels, and sniffed greedily at the reek of strong spirits. And there were stacks of shiny weapons and many bolts of gay cloth. For the unsophisticated savage it was Paradise. For a few moments he wavered, breathing rapidly, with Hamilton watching the change of expression on the usually immobile features.

"Call one hundred warriors and let each carry all he can," crisply invited the commander, believing the contest won.

Boone thrilled with triumph. No Indian could resist such an offer. With a hoarse cry the Fish muffled his face in his blanket to shut out temptation, and rushed from the door. At a distance he called back:

"The Shawnees do not sell their children. The Big Turtle will go to his lodge."

Sadly disappointed Boone fell in behind him. Hamilton followed him to the gate, and, as they parted, said:

"I'm sorry. Maybe he will think better of it. I never experienced anything like it. I offered him goods valued at a hundred pounds sterling in Montreal. I believe he will be forced to trade when his warriors earn of my offer."

Undoubtedly great pressure would have been brought to bear on the chief by his followers had he not given the order to start for Chillicothe before Hamilton's offer could be known. And Boone, ruefully accompanying his captors through the trackless woods, moodily told himself—

"Dan'l, it all comes of makin' yerself too dog-gone pop'lar."

CHILLICOTHE made merry for many days after the warriors returned, loaded with ransom. And there was none inclined to break away for the hazards of the war-path. James and George Girty were away on some business with their brother Simon, and Boone was treated with the greatest kindness. The festivities concluded with the sacred ceremony of transmuting a white man into a red.

The first step in his transformation was the plucking out of his beard and almost all his hair—a very painful process. A scalp-lock, three inches in diameter, was left on the crown. The next step, and the more impressive from the Indian point of view, was the ceremony at the river, where the white blood was washed out, leaving Boone a red man. By the time he had been escorted to the council-house, where his head and face were painted in due form, there was none of his old neighbors who would have hesitated to pronounce him a full-blooded Shawnee, unless they glimpsed his blue eyes.

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Then the medicine-men solemnly pronounced him the son of Black Fish, and there followed a final round of rejoicing. Boone remained the consummate artist, and, although soul-sick from worrying over the fate of Boonesborough, allowed nothing of his true self to show. His unfailing good-nature, his resourcefulness, and his knowledge of woodcraft, quickly made him the most popular brave on the Miami. After he had served a mild term of probation he was to devote all his energies to the manufacture of gunpowder, Black Fish told him.

He was free to come and go, but he knew his every move was closely watched once he left the lodges behind. Always there was a red brother eager for his society, or else several young braves kept tabs on him from a distance. He pretended to be unconscious of this espionage and did nothing which might suggest a desire to leave his new people. Now he was initiated into blood kinship to the nation and was pronounced a son of a famous chief the Indians considered him a Shawnee; and so complex, or simple, was the savage mind, they believed he was a Shawnee, and that by painting his face they had changed his heart.

The surveillance was maintained not because they doubted his sincerity in becoming a Shawnee, but to guard him against a moment of madness, when a fragment of a memory might seduce him into the guilt of a horrible offense—an attempt to escape. Behind the prevention of such an evil was the confident belief that in a short time all remembrances of his former life would fade from his mind, when he would be as thoroughly trusted as was his new father.

He played his rôle exquisitely and was rewarded by a relaxation on the part of the spies. One day he went to Black Fish and tersely complained:

"Big Turtle grows fat and lazy. Big Turtle is a mighty hunter. Warriors go for game and come back with not enough to feed their squaws."

"My son shall go after game and shame his brothers," proudly declared the Fish. "Here is a gun. My son left it in his father's lodge long ago and thought he had lost it." And Boone was overjoyed to receive his own rifle. "Here are bullets and powder."

And the chief counted out six bullets and measured out as many charges of powder, and with a significant glance handed them over.

Boone took them with a great show of elation. They were just enough to permit a modest bag of game, and wholly insufficient to justify flight through the wilderness to the Ohio. As soon as he was out of sight of the village he plunged into the woods and doubled back until satisfied no spies were following him. Then he carefully cut three bullets in two and likewise divided three measures of powder. With half a bullet and half a charge of powder he drew upon his unsurpassed woodcraft and returned to the village to boast of the game he had hung up along the trail from the south.

Women were sent for it and returned heavily laden and loudly singing the praises of the greater hunter. He had killed more meat than any two warriors would bring down with ten times his allowance of ammunition. Three whole bullets and as many charges of powder remained safely concealed where he could recover them when the great moment came. His natural love of the chase was energized by his frantic longing to reach Kentucky and safeguard the settlements.

Day after day he asked for lead and powder, and as often it was counted and measured out to him, the results being checked up on his return. Each trip added to his precious store hidden a short distance from the village. Once he came back, bringing two bullets and two charges of powder. These he left in Black Fish's lodge. On the next trip the chief allowed him ten charges.

For four months he played his game in this fashion. More than once, when deep in the woods, he almost succumbed to temptation, and each time his habitual caution restrained him. One strong brake on his inclination was his desire to learn of the Indians' plans. He had remained so long with them, and Spring now being at hand with its frivolous buds and new leaves, he persisted in enduring that he might take something more valuable than life to Kentucky.

Early in June he noticed warriors were leaving the village in groups; nor were they equipped for the war-path. They returned and brought no game. They conferred much with Black Hoof. The younger warriors grew uneasy and lost their zest for the hunt. Boone read the signs as he steadily

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went and came and increased his reputation as a hunter.

"Looks like I was gittin' rations for the whole derned nation," he disgustedly told himself one day as he slowly returned to the village. "I'm dog-gone tired of feedin' Injuns. Wish this meat had been goin' to Boonesborough! Reckon I've got 'nough lead an' powder to see me through. Reckon I'll break loose in a day or so."

His sudden plans to escape were frustrated the moment he entered his lodge and found Black Fish waiting to speak with him.

"The Big Turtle is the mightiest hunter on the Little Miami. He is tired of following the elk and deer. He shall rest. With the next sun warriors go to the Scioto to make salt. They boast they can teach my son how to make salt. I have said they are children beside him."

Without a moment's hesitation Boone replied—

"The Turtle will go with them and show them his father has a straight tongue."

But his heart sank at the thought of an enforced absence from the village at the moment when the very atmosphere quivered with the expectancy of things about to be done.

However, he went away lustily singing an old English song in Shawnee that none should read his heart. Ten days later he came back, his companions humbly confessing he not only had surpassed them in a task peculiarly their own, but had taught them much about the business. Boone had no ears for the praise heaped upon him.

For during his absence, Chillicothe was overrun with braves from other villages, some coming from far north. He estimated that fully five hundred strange warriors were camping about the village. They had brought no women, nor children, and they were painted and armed for war. He saw his old enemies the Wyandots. He observed Black Bird, famous in war and principal chief of the Chippewas. He was chagrined to learn from a young buck, burning to take his first war trail, that during his visit to the Scioto the leading men and chiefs had held an important council. Hiding his curiosity he remarked—

"My father, the Fish, told me about it."

"The red ax hangs over Boonesborough!" exulted the young man.

"So my father says," grunted Boone. "He says they start soon."

"Within seven sleeps. More Chippewas and Wyandots are coming. We do not need them but the Black Hoof says we will wait for them."

"It is well," said Boone, turning back to his lodge.

THAT night Boone repaired his moccasins and stole an extra pair from the lodge of the Fish, and put a razor-edge on his hunting knife. By daybreak, rifle in hand, he went to Black Fish and said the salt-making had made him hungry for hunting.

The fraction of a minute the chief hesitated, then handed over three bullets and the powder, saying—

"Big Turtle must not go far. There is to be a council and he is to be there."

Boone struck into the woods and made direct for a hollow oak and secured his stock of ammunition and started for the Ohio. He knew he would have about ten hours' start, provided he met no stragglers. Once his flight was discovered the pursuit would be fast and furious. A voice in his soul kept crying to him—

"You must make Boonesborough!"

Just as insistently would the savages seek to prevent his warning from reaching the fort.

Thus began one of the most momentous races ever ran on the continent, Kentucky being the immediate prize, with the fate of the thirteen Colonies possibly trembling in the balance. If surprised, the fort undoubtedly would fall. This captured, the Kentucky line would break; and the old menace of red warfare being carried over the mountains into Virginia would become a fact.

As to his personal fate Boone fully realized it would be most terrible. From the Indian point of view his escape was an outrageous act of treachery. Having been adopted in due form as a son of the Shawnee Nation there could be no punishment cruel enough to square his crime.

With every energy, mental and physical, keyed to the highest pitch, he raced through the damp and silent forest; now doubling on his tracks, now wading along the bed of a stream, and always picturing the infuriated red men swarming after him. Several times during his flight he was forced to turn aside to avoid small bands of Indians making for the Miami.

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As he neared the Ohio and heard the rush of the mighty river pounding through the trees he believed his danger from roving bands to be ended. Consequently he was greatly startled on entering a little glade to hear a guttural voice asking:

"Why does a Shawnee run to the south? Does he scout ahead of our brothers?"

The pioneer came to a plunging halt, then remembered his disguise, and flung up his hand and demanded—

"What totem is behind those words?"

"He-Who-Jumps, of the Patakeenothe clan." And a travel-stained warrior stepped from behind a bush. "How far behind are our warriors?"

"One, two sleeps. Why is not the son of the Rabbit clan with the war-party?"

"He comes from the Kentucky to say Boonesborough is asleep. The stockade is weak in places. The gates are open. The white men plant corn. The——"

He choked and began rubbing his throat, the action allowing his blanket to drop at his heels. Then with a fierce yell he plucked out his knife and leaped upon the pioneer, screaming:

"Blue eyes! False son of Black Fish! You betray the Shawnees, your people! The Miami couldn't wash you red, but blood will!"

Although taken by surprise Boone reacted automatically, and succeeded in grasping the knife-hand of his assailant as they smashed together, breast to breast. With the Indian's free hand tearing at his throat the pioneer hugged in his chin and forced his adversary's head back with his right hand. For several moments they remained stationary; then He-Who-Jumps succumbed to the terrific pressure, and, with the cry of discovery smothered in his throat, went over backward with Boone on top. For a few seconds they writhed and twisted, the savage tugging at the ax in Boone's belt. Just as the weapon was being brought clear Boone shifted his tactics, snatched it, and delivered a mortal blow on the painted skull.

Darting to cover the pioneer waited to recover his wind and to make sure the brief struggle had not attracted the attention of other Indians. After satisfying himself He-Who-Jumps was traveling alone he resumed his journey, moving less rapidly and more warily.

On reaching the Ohio he found the river very high and with a furious current. He was a poor swimmer and knew he would go down within a few rods of the shore. Then began a hurried search of the bank, with fortune finally favoring him with a canoe. It was badly damaged and had been cast aside as useless. To Boone it was a bridge, his one chance of fulfilling his destiny. Hastily patching it and fashioning a paddle from a strip of fallen timber he set forth, paddling and bailing, and completed the crossing just as the leaky craft collapsed, leaving him up to his shoulders in the water and holding his rifle and powder-horn high above his head.

He soon discovered he must run new risks, that small parties of scouts were between him and the Kentucky River, presumably thrown out while he was making salt on the Scioto. As he came upon signs of these he took to sleeping in hollow logs and going without food. His feet were bleeding, every muscle of his body ached as though pounded to pulp, and he was famished for food.

It was not until the third day after his flight began that he dared use his rifle and enjoy a full meal. It was a buffalo near the lower Blue Lick, only a few miles from the spot of his capture, that tempted the shot. Feasting royally he smoked a small quantity of the meat and struck off southwest. On the morning of the fifth day he staggered up to the gate of the stockade and narrowly escaped being shot for a marauder.

"Gorrymighty! Dan'l Boone!" yelled a well-known voice; and the pioneer, lying at full length inside the fort, smiled grimly. It was Gutherie, who had escaped from Detroit shortly after being ransomed. "We reckoned ye was dead, Dan'l! Glory be! Lots of the men have took their famblies back to Virginny. Yer wife an' the childrun think y're wiped out, an' have gone to live with her father on the Yadkin."

"How many is left?" panted Boone.

"Not quite a hundred. Not more'n thirty of 'em are of fightin' age."

"Every one is of fightin' age," gritted Boone. "The greatest war-party ever sent to Cantuck is on my heels. Start an express to Holston for help. Throw out scouts to fetch us word when the varmints cross the Ohio. Bring in the cattle. Set the others to work patchin' up the stockade."

With no time to welcome their leader the inmates of the fort turned to their tasks with

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feverish energy. By afternoon about all that could be accomplished in strengthening the defenses had been done, and yet no alarm from the forest. Boone, revived by a few hours' sleep, shifted to his border garb and washed the paint from his face and pulled a fur cap low over his bare poll and prepared to start out to locate the enemy. The garrison as a unit objected to his doing this; and while they protested a cry rang out from a bastion, quickly followed by exclamations of rejoicing. Boone darted through the gate and beheld the tall form of Simon Kenton swinging leisurely through the clearing.

"Felt it in my bones you was alive, Dan'l," exulted the newcomer, grinning broadly as he seized the pioneer's hand. "When every one was reckonin' they had danced your sculp I just wouldn't believe it. I was on my way to find you beyond the Ohio when I run into about a million reds, chasing something. I kept under cover and heard enough to know they was after you. I've been trailing you all the way from the Licking. Much obleeged for the buf'ler you shot; it saved me time."

"They'll be here any minute!" cried Boone.

"They turned back at the Ohio. Forgot to tell that. They must 'a' reckoned you'd got through and warned the fort," was the soul-stirring reply.

Other scouts came in, each reporting there was no sign of Indians. That night a half-starved salt-maker, escaped from Detroit, arrived with important news. Hamilton's military strategy demanded the fall of Kentucky. He had sent word to the Indians to withhold their attack until joined by two companies of soldiers.

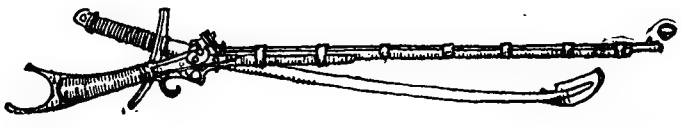
"That's what made 'em turn back at the Ohio," decided Boone. "The runners overtook them with the message."

His next move was characteristic of his theory of defense. Taking a score of sharpshooters, all well mounted, he rapidly crossed the Ohio to strike the Indians before their reinforcements could arrive. Undiscovered he advanced to within a few miles of Chillicothe without finding his chance. Swinging aside to Paint Creek, a tributary of the Scioto, he came upon thirty Shawnees hastening to join the main war-party. Half of these were killed and the rest put to flight, leaving their horses and baggage. Falling rapidly back with his plunder he led his men into the stockade two hours ahead of the enemy.

While this audacious stroke made the foe wary of other surprises the situation inside the fort was desperate. A force of some fifty men and boys was opposed to the largest army ever sent into Kentucky. From the moment the Indians crossed the river the siege was on night and day. Flaming arrows threatened the corner cabins with destruction, while bullets whistled over the stockade continuously. The defenders got but little sleep and food was scarce.

Their predicament seemed hopeless, yet the spirit of Kentucky refused to acknowledge defeat. When even Boone was believing all was lost, the victory was won. The Indians, disheartened by the stubborn resistance, suddenly decided to raise the siege; and another morning found them vanished from the river, hastening to return to the Miami.

THUS did the golden door of glorious promise begin to swing open for the fair region. There was to be further fighting, but of a sporadic nature. Never again was the fate of Kentucky to hang on the slender thread of one man's endurance and whole-hearted devotion. And the man who had done so much to save Kentucky when she was starving became the plodding backwoodsman and was easily stripped of his land grants because he was too guileless to guard his own against white men. He left his name as his monument, and it will endure as long as Americanism endures.



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How the Palio was Won

By Lucia Mead Priest

On July second and August fifteenth of every year, the seventeen wards, the *contrade* of Sienna, Italy, are pitted against one another in a horse race, called the *Palio*. It is a consecrated festival, run in honor of the city's patron saint, the Virgin Mary. The prize of the contest is a silken banner, that, too, is called the *Palio*. The festival is a survival of Italy's medieval days. The *contrade* are named after animals: as *Aquila*—the eagle; *Giraffa*—the giraffe; *Bruco*—the caterpillar; etc.

"BUT I can't understand it, Luigi! Even when Astorre is off his feed he never acts indifferent to me! Is he ill? I can't help worrying!"

"When did you notice the change, Giuliana?"

"This afternoon when he came back from the trial race. Usually he is as full of spirits as a mischievous boy, but today he was as heavy as an old cab horse, and when I offered him sugar—sugar, Luigi—he sniffed and snuffled at it. I had to coax him to eat it. In some way, he does not look right. What can be the matter?"

The girl looked anxious, puzzled, and her eyes filled with tears as she turned questioningly from the horse in the shadow of his rude box-stall to the lover who was smiling tenderly, though half quizzically, at her anxiety. He drew her to him and kissed the worry frown between the lustrous brown eyes.

"Don't you trouble, *cara mia*," he said as he laid his cheek against the glossy head in the hollow of his arm. Then in a low voice as if afraid of eavesdroppers—"Look again, sweetheart, take a good, long survey of your—" hesitatingly—"Astorre."

Giuliana looked askance at Luigi, then turned to scrutinize her horse, little more than a silhouette in the dull light of the stable. She could see the graceful outlines of her pet, see, too, a patch of white on his left hind quarter that lay like a fleck of foam, the only break in his jetty coat. She moved to see him more distinctly; then, with a startled light in her eyes:

"Luigi, what do you mean? Why that isn't——"

A quick hand upon her mouth and a sharp "S-sh, what's that?" from her lover cut off her exclamation. She followed his eyes to a corner of the stable where lay a pile of coarse straw. It was vibrating from a cautious movement within, rustling, as if some animal were worming its way about. When the voices stopped the motion ceased.

Luigi's arm about the girl grew tense as he listened. His eyes narrowed to a line as he peered intently into the thick shadows of the corner. Then with a gesture to her to be silent he said distinctly:

"Just a rat. As I was saying, I'll be around about nine for Astorre."

Again a rustle. In two strides Luigi reached the corner. He made a quick dive into the straw and brought forth a wriggling, small boy of nine or ten years.

"Ouch; you let me alone. Let go; you hurt," whined the child.

Luigi held his squirming captive at arm's

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length as if he had been the possible rat, then set him down with a thud, though keeping a strong hold on the whimpering prisoner.

"So it's you! What have you to say for yourself? Why are you here in hiding, you miserable little imp?"

He shook him as if to jolt the words from the sullen mouth. The boy's shifty glance would not meet the indignant face of the man.

"Speak up, or I'll take a way to make you."

Luigi's eyes flamed while his lips were drawn back like a snarling hound's. It was not the first battle with his sweetheart's brother.

"Oh, Luigi dear," pleaded Giuliana, "don't, don't hurt him. He will tell. Carlo, speak; tell sister why you are here like this spying upon us from under cover. Don't you know how sneaky it is?"

The boy had the grace to look ashamed and began digging his dirty, bare toes into the rough straw at his feet.

"Stop your blubbering, Carlo," said Luigi, "and try to be a man. Out with it! I'll give you one minute to answer, honestly too, or you'll sweat for it. Why are you spying?"

"They—they—made me," muttered the boy, with furtive glances in all directions.

"'They?' Who are 'they?'"

Carlo began to tremble, looking about him with scared eyes, swinging his head from side to side like a trapped animal.

"Who are 'they'? Speak! Do you mean the fellows of the Aquila?"

The boy nodded.

"They said they'd kill me if I told."

"Did they? A brave lot! So, you are the leak we've been hunting for weeks. You're the traitor in our camp, you young cur!"

"Oh, Luigi," protested the girl, "you are so hard!"

"Forgive me, Giuliana, but he has made us heaps of trouble. We'll make short work with him. Forgive me, dearest girl, but it must be. We can't be easy with a traitor," said Luigi sternly.

He tightened his grasp upon the boy, strode with him to the door, and gave a long, shrill whistle, then two staccato notes. It was only a moment before an answer came like bird answering bird. Cautiously around the corner of the low shack came a coarse black head and swarthy face, followed by the shambling figure of the man. He was undersized, but he looked to be of great strength, adequate for almost any man-handling and quite equal to the custody of the small prisoner.

"Here you are, Ugo. What do you think of this? Here's the traitor we've been hunting. This is the precious specimen who has made all our trouble at the Giraffa. Yes, it's only too true! Tie him up. Keep him fast till tomorrow night when we'll have a settling. No, I'll not go along; you know where to put him."

Ugo gave Luigi an understanding wink.

"He's a bad 'un. I'll look after him all right. It's bread and water for him and a basting if he tries any of his tricks on me."

THE boy wilted completely as the hairy hand took him by the arm. He knew there was no escape now and no pardoning, nothing but justice. He made a pitiable figure as, hunching down in his loose clothes, he shuffled away, his head buried in his arms, sobbing now with wholehearted sincerity.

As they passed out through the low door, a shaft of light struck in, piercing the darkness of the rude interior and picking out the figure of the stalwart youth and that of the beautiful girl where she leaned against the rough boards of the stall, her attitude an abandonment of sorrow and dejection. Luigi's kind heart smote him, though he felt his severity was justified.

He bent over her, but she did not look up. Then he raised the drooping head and gently kissed her trembling lips.

"It is fortunate we caught him, Giuliana. For weeks we have known some one was tattling. Two of our *contrade*, even, have been under suspicion. All the time it has been this scamp who has been undermining us. I never dreamed of such treachery. I have not been careful in what I have said when I have been here. *Dio mio*, but if he had not been caught we should have had little chance tomorrow!

"Now as for Astorre—he is safe, dear. That is all you may know. Signore Mark has a clever plan, but I'll tell you nothing about it; then you can not be surprised into anything that will give a hint to our enemies should they dare to test you in any way.

"Listen to this, *carissima;* tomorrow you

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are to be a grand lady, a very grand lady indeed, and sit in the reserved seats with all the fine foreign women. Yes, really, you! Signor Mark has so decided. Here are the tickets for you and granddad. Signor Mark will stay by me till the last gun, then he'll join you on the reserved seats.

"Run about the town, dear, hold your head high, and keep a cheerful face. See all the fun and be a brave girl. Signor Mark and I are playing a close game, but we are bound to win. Not a horse can touch Astorre, no fear!

"Now 'tis *buona notte, carissima.*"

He gave her a lingering kiss and another, then turned determinedly away and strode out into the soft light of the closing day. He had gone but a short distance when the familiar signal greeted him from some one advancing along the road. He halted. It was Ugo returning.

"*Ecco,* I've tied up the cub safe and sound. I'll watch at Giuliana's tonight. They may try some queer business with that horse. But, Luigi, what I don't like is that Bruco meeting. You know the Bruco is only half friendly. I suspect treachery. I saw that —— scoundrel of a Lorenzetti coming from there yesterday. Oh, well, laugh if you will!"

"You're an old woman, Ugo," scoffed Luigi. "Pietro would tip us if there were any doubts. You can't distrust him. You make me laugh, you and Giuliana. I should think you thought me a wax doll. Everything is all right. Hump along, old man, and don't worry about me. Keep your eyes sharp for surprises, that's all."

Ugo grinned sheepishly.

"*Ecco, buona fortuna,* Luigi," he said as he started on.

"Good luck it is," said Luigi, slapping his back, then turned and sped down the dusty road toward Sienna.

He took his way through by-streets and alleys, traveling but a short distance in the main thoroughfare, the Via Cavour, and slipped at last into the tiny Piazza of the Tolmei and through the narrow *calli* that lead to the Piazza of Provenzano. Its church, Santa Maria, was silent and empty at that hour. He could but picture to himself how it might look on the morrow, its gray façade aglow with its *contrada's* colors, and its square reverberating with the shouts of the victory he and Astorre had won for the Giraffa of Provenzano.

He smiled to himself as he thought of Giuliana puzzling her pretty head over his half-told story of her pet.

"Dear girl, how she will laugh when she knows the hoax. And as for Signor Mark's black Boss munching his oats in Astorre's stall—well, if Giuliana can be fooled for an hour about her pet, nobody else will guess, till too late. Our American pal is a great old chap. They'll have to get up early to get around Signor Mark!"

Thus musing, Luigi slipped cheerfully through the velvet shadows of the byways, for it was already dusk between the high buildings that cut off every glint of the dying sunset.

Luigi paused as he reached the club rooms of the Bruco to make sure no unfriendly eyes were about. Always the rivalry between the city's wards was keen, but never, within his memory, had it been so lively as this year. Many a *fantino* before him had been guarded days in advance for fear of treachery or bodily harm.

This *contrada* of the Caterpillar was on amicable terms with his of the Giraffe but—it was just as well to be cautious. So he took another survey of the neighborhood before entering. Save for a dim light in the lower hall the house was in darkness. The doors of the club-rooms were closed. The place was, apparently, tenantless. He passed on to the fourth story. The committee for the final arrangements were to meet there, he had been notified. He was the first comer, he saw as he entered the room.

There was little furniture in it. Two or three common chairs, a deal table, and one chair that looked rather incongruous and out of place among its common fellows. It was of handsome proportions, of a dignified grandfatherly type with a sturdy, high back and stout arms.

Luigi lounged listlessly across to the windows that opened on a broad picture of lovely Tuscan country, of farms and olive orchards, running off toward Oservanza. Beyond, edging the horizon, ran a line of low hills now buried in banks of gold and lavender clouds.

Just beneath the window, separated only by a narrow alley, lay a stretch of the medieval wall that once had thrown its arm entirely around this old hill town. Already the moat, at its base, was lighted by myriads of fireflies, the *lucciole,* lovers' vows,

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they call them. They were so vivid, so thick, that in the darkness, the foss was like a velvet casket filled with sparkling gems.

LUIGI smiled. Only a few evenings before he had caught a handful of these insect lamps and had set them as a crescent in Giuliana's dusky hair to rival the brightness of her lustrous eyes and, bowing low, with a courtier's obeisance, had called her his "queen of the night," his "*bellissima di Sienna.*"

He smiled again as he thought of her dearness and her beauty but roused himself from his revery to investigate the outlook from the other window from which a shallow loggia, or balcony, extended.

He stepped out upon it, and, as was his custom, for he was quick of observation, noted how the tiled roofs ran down the steep hillside almost like a flight of giant steps; saw too, as he bent to light a match, that a huge beam, evidently being used by workmen for repairs, ran across from the third story of the club-house to the next to shore up a dilapidated roof and a chimney of uncertain stability. Four stories below was a tiny garden now almost invisible in the twilight.

The shadows in town and country began to thicken. Over the roof-tops, one by one, came the twinkle of street lamps.

He could look into the next house; into the room where the family was seated at its evening meal. A wee fellow was stowing away great spoonfuls of porridge with a businesslike haste that spoke of a pressing engagement elsewhere. Luigi beamed upon him sympathetically, then thought of Carlo, and of the morrow, and grew troubled and grave. He shivered a little, though he was not cold, for the air was soft and warm.

He turned to go back into the room. As he did this he heard a cautious click of the latch and the door closed softly as if by some one entering stealthily. He threw away his telltale cigaret and waited. The newcomer crossed the room hesitatingly, as if not quite familiar, to the electric light over the mantel.

Luigi watched eagerly, somewhat puzzled at the extreme quiet of this member of the committee. The sickly glare from a grimy bulb lit up the face of the "worst-hated man in Sienna," Giovanni Lorenzetti, against whom Ugo had warned him. It was he who for a year past had pursued Giuliana with insolent and annoying public attentions till she had ceased to go to the town unless accompanied by an older person.

Luigi's teeth shut with a click. His breath came thick and fast.

Fool, fool, that he was, to have been so cocksure of himself, thought Luigi. Something was up! Why had he not listened to Ugo?

He shrugged his shoulders while a mulish, ugly look settled upon his usually frank countenance. He strolled carelessly into the room and stopped as if surprised.

"You—here? Why? When was the committee honored by such a noble addition to its numbers?" he asked sarcastically.

The man turned quickly, a malicious sneer distorting a face that might have been handsome before a dissolute life had marred it with indelible stains.

"Committee? So, you fell. The plan worked. Our innocent young fly walked right into the bad spider's web, did he? And a tight little web he'll find it. Listen to me, you —— meddling cub," said Lorenzetti. "You've carried things with a high hand, you and your virtuous *contrada*, but you've gone the limit. I have the game in my hands now and you'll dance. You thought to best Giovanni Lorenzetti—you, a country bumpkin! You'll have another think.

"I don't want you killed—not quite yet—" significantly—"but let me tell you we'll stop little short of it if you don't play up and listen to reason. I've too much at stake to be thwarted. What's your price? Haven't we hit it yet? Queer the race tomorrow and you may name it. Swear you'll play second——"

"Swear? I?" interrupted Luigi, his eyes blazing with indignation. "*Gia! Gia!* I'll swear—swear that I'll enter Astorre for Giraffa tomorrow and you and your whole —— *contrada* can't stop me! Kill me—you? You dare not, you long-nosed son of a pig! I've too many friends. They know you too well. You are watched at every turn. What are you doing here, anyway? Rome was too hot for you and turned you out. You were too much for her stomach, so you came slinking into Sienna with your bedevilments, and it was a sorry day for us when you came.

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"For three years this town hasn't had a straight *Palio*. *Contrada* after *contrada* has gone down under your bribes and threats. "*Dio mio!* But they were honest boys before you came sneaking among them tempting them beyond their strength, fellows so poor they hardly know the meaning of an extra lire to say nothing of a fifty. You have played on every evil passion in them. I know, for I've seen the change, you devil!"

Luigi flashed a look of such utter contempt and loathing that for a moment the bold eyes of Lorenzetti could not meet the indignant blaze that scorched through even to his dulled consciousness.

But Luigi gave him no chance to reply.

"Who are you anyway with your arrogance, your pretensions, your airs of the great and mighty, that you come among decent people as though you were their equal? But your days here are numbered. There are still a few men in town, and they've had enough of you!

"Listen to me, grand Signore Lorenzetti; by the grace of St. Mary, Astorre runs for the Giraffa tomorrow and wins the *Palio*. 'Tis a sure thing—mark that—sure!"

Luigi snapped defiant fingers in the face of his enemy who was white and shaking with rage. He swore a vicious oath, and if a look could have killed, Luigi would have met his finish there and then.

"Win? You? Not if it takes every denaro in Aquila and every lire of my own in the bargain. You? Win? Quite a conquering hero, in your own mind and that baggage of a Giuliana's!"

HE SAID no more, for a terrific blow from Luigi's fist not only shut his mouth but laid him out upon the floor. Before he could rise Luigi was upon him.

"Take that and that, you cur!" he foamed. "That name is not for lips like yours!"

All the pent-up fury of the year found its way out through those hammering fists. It was a marvel he did not kill the man who, taken unawares, was entirely at his mercy.

Lorenzetti managed to rap the floor with his heels. Unfortunately Luigi was quite too busy to notice this. It was not until there was a rush of feet at the door and the onslaught of three men that he was brought to his senses. It was too late then to recover himself. The men had him pinioned; squirm and struggle as he might they were too much for him.

Lorenzetti, near a collapse, managed to aspirate an order to "hold him fast," as, setting his teeth hard, with groans and oaths, he pulled himself up and into a chair. He sat breathing convulsively, then gasped hoarsely:

"Bind him tighter, you idiots. Now sit—sit, I say!"

One of the men gave Luigi a brutal kick back of the knees and he fell into the great chair.

"Tie him to that. Now gag him," wheezed Lorenzetti. "There—" as they finally secured their prisoner—"*fantino di Giraffa*, that is how you'll run the *Palio* tomorrow. You haven't the ghost of a chance to escape; our friends in the Bruco will see to that. As for Astorre and his mistress—he laughs best who laughs last."

Jeering and swearing, he staggered to the door, a much battered if victorious villain. Luigi could but feel an inward satisfaction as he looked at him. At least he would take no beauty prize at the *Palio*, and chances were slight that he would be able to see the race with unimpeded vision, if present indications were significant. For already one eye was tightly closed, and the other showed every symptom of following suit.

When the door shut at last upon his enemies Luigi, who had been stoical as a dervish under penance, collapsed. All his bravado slipped away, leaving him, boy that he was, desperate and heartsick over the situation.

Of course, if he did not appear in the morning Ugo would suspect foul play and Signor Mark would make things hot till he was found. Trust the American for that! But even so, he would be in no condition for the race. Fitness and cunning were quite as essential as horsemanship, with the Aquila and the Bruco, his enemies.

"Fool, idiot that I was! *Dio mio*, how can I get out of this! Blast this temper of mine, why didn't I temporize! If it were only myself, but Giuliana—dear one!"

This thought and what it would mean to her made him frantic. He strained and struggled, trying by force to loosen the ropes that bit into his flesh like angry teeth.

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It was of no avail. He fell back almost fainting from the pain. His face was as white as a dead man's. Great drops of cold perspiration stood out on his forehead like so many glass beads.

Was there no way out, no way?

As he lay back in a half stupor breathing as does a spent runner, like a spoken word he seemed to hear—

"Yes, one way."

A vague, half-formed picture floated before his mental vision, gray, fantasmal, wavering at first like a photographic film on its screen—then steadying.

It was of an old man sitting by a dusty roadside tearing ravenously at a loaf of black bread which he washed down with long gulps of the country's red wine, a bottle of which a small boy was holding for him. The man was nearly starved; he was worn and old and shabby. His soiled finery gave evidence of the truth of his story, that he had been part of a traveling show.

After he had made sure that not a crum of his coarse food had escaped, and had tapped the bottle for its last drop, he turned to his young benefactor and with trembling lips and moist eyes thanked him with deep gratitude in his sunken eyes. His was the old, old story of advancing years, a growing incapacity for his work, a slip or two, and heartless dismissal.

Luigi, half dazed, pulled himself up in his chair, as this picture, vivid as reality, unrolled and gave way to another. This time he saw the same old mountebank, but in a cobbled stone piazza filled with a crowd of grinning countrymen.

He was holding forth with the braggadocio of his kind, extolling the wonders of his magic, while two yokels were busy binding him fast with strong ropes. He had wagered he would free himself from his cords in less than half an hour. Magical indeed it would be, for it did not seem a feat within human power.

The crowd shook incredulous heads and smiled derisively at his first attempts to move. But even as they smiled the great muscles in the gaunt arms began to stir. Just a quiver at first that slowly grew to an unmistakable ripple, that increased to a steady motion, to a rhythmic flex and flow. Expanding, contracting, contracting, expanding, till right before their astonished eyes, with a triumphant "*Ecco*," one great arm writhed slowly out of its coils. In only a few moments the other followed and the man stood free.

"*C' fini, signor*'," he said as he finished with a flourishing hand.

He turned a pale but satisfied face to the young Luigi who stood mouth and eyes wide open like one entranced, while the crowd shouted its admiration.

Later, under vows of everlasting secrecy, he imparted the manner of the wonderful trick to his small benefactor, and even went so far as to make the boy perform it with a simple tying. And now, after all these years, like bread upon the waters, it had come back to Luigi in his hour of distress.

Somewhere in his subconsciousness it lay if he could only reach it and bring it forth. Tentatively he began to try the ropes, cautiously, very cautiously, for they cut like withes of steel. How was it? Ah—he remembered, but *Dio mio*, how it hurt!

Though his muscles were as supple as youth, training, and perfect health could make them, still this was no work for a novice but for a skilled contortionist. His nerves, strung to their highest pitch, answered the call of coordinating muscles. Little by little, like the speeding up of heavy machinery, the cords began to play.

It drew on all of his courage, his patience, his endurance. He persisted doggedly, but it was slow. The first faint quiver was followed by more certain action. Again and again he stopped, despairing, the torture was so great. Then he tried again, the motion growing to a definite flex and flow. Closing his eyes, with one tremendous struggle his right arm came tremblingly from its cruel bonds while Luigi fell back, faint from exhaustion.

THE strain had been harrowing, but hope revived him. It was the work of a moment to pull out his big pocket-knife and free himself entirely.

As soon as it was possible to use his legs, numbed from the suspended circulation, he stumbled to the window that overlooked the city wall and its moat.

Four stories to the street with the addition of twenty-five feet of wall and moat were not encouraging. It wouldn't do; he had been foolhardy enough for one day. But he would fool them, make them think he had gone that way.

He lifted the great chair and set it hard against the window, tied the sections of

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rope together and knotted it about the chair, threw the loose end out of the window to dangle there as testimony to a desperate escape.

He turned to the other window. He remembered the step-like roofs and thought of the beam. It was none too soon. Before he could fairly consider the situation he heard voices and feet on the stairs. His jailers were returning.

In a flash he slipped to the balcony and had barely time to stride across it and let himself down, hanging by his hands, when his tormentors, mocking and jeering, crashed into the room.

As they turned on the light, Luigi, trusting to his "good fortune," dropped. It was with him, for he struck the beam saddlewise. He did not wait, but as fast as he could hitched along till he came under the shadow of the loggia, and plastered himself against the house wall.

Who could say his lucky star was not in the ascendant, he thought as he noted a smudge of intense blackness in the garden, just under him, suggesting bushes of some height.

Serious as the adventure was he could not help a quiet chuckle as he listened to the cries of dismay and the mad shouts of his captors when they discovered their loss. Their language was quite adequate to the occasion.

They hurled themselves from window to window half crazed. One fellow rushed out to the balcony, under which Luigi was sitting with bated breath, expecting the "I spy" of discovery, and peered into the garden. He even went so far as to light a cigaret, and the flare of his match lit up the space, the beam, and the house, without any effect. He was too unbalanced to register a logical thought. Then, too, that swaying rope at the other window held him, as Luigi had foreseen.

Somebody suggested it would be wise to look up Lorenzetti. Luigi's heart dropped a point. The return of the chief villain was a serious consideration. There would be no fooling the master mind when he came back.

In a stampede the men left the room and all three ran down to the street and away on their search.

It was Luigi's happy chance. He peered into the depths below him. It was very dark, and the distance looked great. There was nothing else to do; he dared not risk the roofs.

As he was edging along to clear himself from the wall, he heard the men returning with Lorenzetti's voice, usually a low drawl, now pitched high and incisive with anger. The men stopped for a moment by the garden gate, but just for a moment, and went into the house.

Luigi swung himself from the beam, hanging like a ripe plum from its stem, then, with an inward breath, dropped. A dense mass of oleander caught him and buried him in a rough if fragrant embrace. The shock and the strain kept him quiet for several minutes; then as softly as he could he worked his way free of the bushes, groping along the house till he came to the garden wall.

The bolt of the great gate was fast, but he managed to withdraw it without too much sound, and to raise the heavy iron latch. He made a crack for his eyes and looked into the street. As far as he could see it was empty. The lower stories of the houses across the way were in deepest shadow. If he could make that he would be safe as under an invisible cap.

At that moment came a wild shout from the balcony. Luigi closed the gate and shrank against it, like a starfish against its rock, and waited.

The beam, not himself, had been discovered. His heart beat again. While they were discussing their discovery was his chance. Quick as thought he made a crack in the gate and squeezed through it into the street. Then with a casual air he sauntered across the road into the concealing shadows.

His following movements were not leisurely. He slithered down the hillside with the celerity of a hunted weasel. Hugging the walls, stepping into unlighted doorways whenever he heard footsteps approaching, he edged his way, till he came at last to the tiny piazza, a veritable pocket, that lies below the greater one of Provenzano.

Then for the first time he caught a full breath. But resting was out of the question. He knew a little shack out through the Porta Romana, in the farming district, that would be deserted at this time. If he could make that he would be safe until morning. He longed with all that was in him to go to Giuliana and tell her of the

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night's adventure. But he dared not. For her sake and his own the old haunts must not know him.

His long legs made quick work of the distance. The moon was just rising as he left the highway and struck off through the fields and orchards. Once a whistle and halloo caused him to quicken his already fast steps, but that was the only interference.

He found the hut deserted as he had hoped. Its sole furniture was a rude bench. It was enough. Luigi sank down upon it, grateful for even that meager comfort. After the excitement of the evening any couch was welcome. With a deep sigh he stretched himself out nor did he move till the morning sun roused him as it blazed in through the open door on his face.

II

THE morning of the *Palio* dawned clear and cool. Thousands from far and near had gathered in the old hill town of Sienna to witness again its brilliant pageant left over from medieval days, preserved in all its ancient glory of form and costume, and its horse race, consecrated to the city's patron saint, the Blessed Virgin.

Early morning saw the vast crowds in motion: surging through its one main street, the narrow confines of the Via Cavour, till, so dense was the throng, progress could be made only inch by inch. The byways and the various squares caught the overflow, foreign and native.

All day sightseers were on the tiptoe of excitement, following up the drum-taps of incipient processions, chasing miniature sorties of gay cavaliers in gorgeous finery who with brilliant banners flashed through the somber alleys and *calli*, lighting up the gray façade of palace or house wall, to whisk out of sight around some unexpected corner leaving deep gloom in their wake.

The broad Piazza Vittorio Emmanuele came in for no small share of interest, for it was here that later in the day the race of the *Palio* was to be run.

Workmen were busy repairing the broken track, which at best was but rough footing for horse and man. It was no smooth tanbark ring of modern excellence, but an up-and-down grade of pavement, the cobbles of the city square, upon which a layer of earth had been rolled. Even though the soil had been blessed, as is everything and everybody entering the contest, it still made no cushioned surface to receive an unfortunate rider's bones, should he be thrown.

Over by the Via Martino, the most dangerous section of the course, officials were readjusting a rampart of hair mattresses against the buildings that abutted the track at that point.

Just here the track squares and it is a dexterous horseman who saves his mount from hurtling diagonally across into those buffers instead of rounding the turn with a proper curve.

There was an air of festivity as well as business about the great piazza, a sparkle and effervescence never failing in any holiday of Italian make. The city's and the country's colors draped all the walls; palace and shop flung their red, white, and green from hundreds of windows and the flags dipped and ruffled to the tap of belated hammers that were driving home the last few pegs to make all secure.

It is this same gay square that has seen so much of Sienna's grim history. The handsome palace of the Publico with its graceful tower of the Mangia lifting a battlemented head hundreds of feet into the sparkling blue, has looked upon many a bloody contest between Sienna and her foes; has seen, too, what was worse, the most fiendish of civil atrocities, when the pavement ran with the blood of her own brave sons and the air was filled with the scorch of human fagots vying with those of wood on trestle and pyre.

That is past, long past. Sienna lives in her present. It is little she cares on a day like this for her martyrs, or anything else that is gruesome. Her vital interest of the moment, is to what *contrada* the handsome *Palio* will go, whether Goose, Eagle, or Caterpillar will be the victorious ward.

Betting has been keen and close. Aquila —Lorenzetti's entry—is the favorite with Bruco not far behind. Those who are real sportsmen say Giraffa has a sure winner in Astorre. Many shake their heads at this. There is a rumor, well substantiated, that Luigi will not ride, that he dares not.

He has not been seen for a day and a night, which confirms the report. It is said "the big man from Rome has it in for him and the Giraffa may have to run with a green man." So went the gossip, running like fire in stubble, about the town.

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All this greeted Giuliana when she reached the city in the early afternoon. The poor girl was sick with apprehension, for she had heard nothing from Luigi since the afternoon before. She was unmoved and apparently undaunted by the tittle-tattle. It was not in vain that she had been warned. While her heart was like lead with dread and anxiety she played her part, put off the busybodies with a toss of her pretty head, and did not commit herself.

Nevertheless, the speculation and nagging were not without their effect upon her, as she knew what her tormentors did not, that her enemies had been daring enough to enter her stable in the early morning intending to "doctor" her handsome pet. Ugo was at home nursing a broken head in consequence. The attempt would have been successful had not some soldiers, going early to their barracks, heard the scrimmage and gone to Ugo's assistance.

The men took to their heels in time and were not caught. With all this preying upon her mind, she took her way with her grandfather, pushing and edging, to the great square. That she was the prettiest maid from all the countryside was nothing to her. She was unconscious alike of her beauty and the admiring glances of both sexes as she made her way through the motley crowd.

Though it was unusual for *contadini* to be seated among the strangers and gentry, Giuliana did not feel at all embarrassed. Signor Mark was to join them later, after he had seen Luigi well under way.

It was all blind to her! Signor Mark had said, "All will be well" and she hoped it would be. Probably she was foolish, she thought, watching with careless eyes a man in the middle of the piazza guarding what looked like a huge rat-trap on the end of a pole.

SUDDENLY something in that trap went off! When she and the crowd resumed their seats, which they had left momentarily, she saw the man was Bianco, and he was there for the signaling. Across the square, in the cavernous doorway of the palace, a white flag was waved. At once the mounted police appeared and proceeded to sweep the vast throng in the track into their respective places.

Thousands of *contadini* and all who were to stand without fee were barred in the saucer-like middle of the piazza. All the many doors that boxed in the reserved seats were made fast and everybody tucked away safe and snug from horses' hoofs. The course lay clear and ready.

Another bang and a fanfare of trumpets; then out from a dark street down the track came a burst of color, a precipitate of rainbow hues. Knights in blue and gold, knights in crimson and green, blue and red, green and yellow, yellow and red, all the prismatic colors in every conceivable combination, in satins, velvets, brocades of the richest, fashioned as they have been for centuries, came slowly down the broad circle in all their medieval sumptuousness. Giuliana's blood mounted to fever heat as she watched impatiently for the red-and-white stripes of the Giraffe.

Contrada after *contrada* came leisurely down the track, each stopping before the judges' stand that the flag-bearers might go through their graceful evolutions with their gorgeous colors that fluttered, waved, flirted their silken wings like mammoth butterflies from the tropics.

Then the ancient wagon bearing past prizes and this year's *Palio* lumbered along. There came a gap, a long one, in the line, and Giuliana's heart forgot to beat for a moment, only to bound with joy, for out of that dark street came a glint of the familiar scarlet and white, quite the simplest costume of the seventeen, but to Giuliana the most beautiful.

And there, riding blithely on Signor Mark's black Boss with the happy air of a conqueror, was her beloved, and the magnificent animal he was leading was her own blessed Astorre. No small black horse with painted patches, but a handsome, nobler edition of the same.

A fleck of white on his rump like a bit of foam, a tuft of white on a fetlock, the rest of him blue-black, shining like a crow's wing. A superb animal with the untamed spirit of a thoroughbred, curveting, as if conscious that the murmurs of approval from the crowd were for him.

Such were her relief and joy, Giuliana sprang to her feet, forgetful of place and convention, and gave the familiar whistle, one long and two staccato notes. Luigi's eyes found his sweetheart. A gleam of emotion swept his face; then a smile like a beam of sunshine illumined its swarthiness as he lifted his jockey cap high in the air and waved a salute.

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Astorre, at the familiar sound, pricked up his dainty ears and pointed them in her direction, danced a step or two, pranced a bit, and threw up his head as if in joy at the well-known call of his mistress.

Giuliana's happiness would have been a little less acute had she seen the evil glare of a much bandaged face in a high window farther down. Happily she did not see, nor did any one else, for, as Luigi had promised himself, Lorenzetti was not out for inspection on this gala day.

When Giuliana dropped back into her seat she found that Signor Mark had slipped into his and was grinning broadly at her. She flushed, a little mortified that she should have given way to her impulse, but he only smiled in sympathy as he said—

"*Ecco, signorina*, what did I tell you?"

She looked the grateful thanks she felt for his kindness, though she said little. Her heart was very full; she had been through a great strain, and tears were not far off. The young American understood and drew her attention to the doorway of the palace where the white flag was again in evidence.

Off went the signal and out of the cavernous depths came the horsemen. No gallant knights in gorgeous trappings now; only plain jockeys in light cotton clothes—and nothing but clothes. No knives, pistols or weapons of any kind, for each man had been searched the last thing before passing out. To be sure, it was the twentieth century, but it was in Italy. The blood of Sienna runs hot and knives are not yet out of fashion.

Nothing? Yes, one thing. Each man had a vicious knotted whip—the *nerbo*. Incredible as it may seem, he is permitted to use this not only on his own horse but on those of his rivals or on the rivals themselves if he pleases.

As they ride up to the judges' stand, where the start is to be made, the place-numbers are called. Not all are happy over the ruling. Bruco draws second place, Drago third, Giraffa fourth, while the sixth place is drawn by Aquila. There is an ugly scowl on that *fantino's* face as he sulkily pushes the handsome chestnut between the ropes that form the starting-line.

The horses are all nervous and excited. They are most of them green, taken from farm and country and new to such excitement. Aquila's mount is from Rome and training for the professional track. Astorre alone seems quiet and poised, but there is a fire in his eyes and a quivering of the sensitive nostrils that bode ill to his rivals.

One *fantino*, he of L'Oca—the Goose—does not succeed in taking his place, his mount is so fractious, but at the word "go," that horse jumps forward and into third place, pushing out the rightful contestant. Then there is a mixup. It isn't quite clear what the fumbling is, only, in the confusion Lupa, on the other side of Luigi, leaps diagonally across Astorre's nose so that for the moment he is blocked by the barrier of Wolf and Goose.

In a flash Luigi sees the knavish trick. His eyes narrow, his mouth sets in a hard line, he turns and gives the Lupa's horse a sharp cut across the nose. The animal swerves and backs. Luigi lifts Astorre with a flying leap clear of his enemies and sweeps on, leaving them somewhat dazed and jostled.

It was all over in the twinkling of an eye, but the rascally scheme had served, for already Aquila and Bruco are off in front three good lengths ahead, and running at top-most speed.

Giuliana groans aloud—

"*Dio mio*, what is it? What has happened?"

"A dirty trick, that's what. A nice judge you have!" said Signor Mark savagely, for his quick eyes had seen the meaning of the jumble. "Never you mind, Giuliana; it won't save them. A little handicap will only make the victory sweeter. It won't fuss Luigi. Believe me, he knows the game. Brace up, little girl; there is nothing here on four legs that can beat Astorre! Now watch out."

With bated breath and eyes like twin stars Giuliana settles to "watch out." The race is on in earnest.

AS THEY reach the Via Mertino with its dangerous slant, Aquilo takes a wide circle, but Bruco shoots diagonally across almost into the line of mattresses that buttress the houses at this point. It staggers him and for the fraction of a moment he loses his pace, then rights himself and thunders up the slope in front of the palace close to the Eagle's heels.

"Aquila! Aquila!" roars the crowd as they sweep by the judges' stand.

Aquila leads Bruco by a length while Giraffa has moved on his position by half

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a length only. The field is running along in a wedge in the rear, quite out of the race.

Luigi is riding easily with great reserve. He holds Astorre down to an even pace with no sign of pressure or anxiety. But Aquila's chestnut is running the race of his young life. Every ounce of speed and power that he has he is spending without caution in his killing pace to win.

As they rush by the judges' stand for the third and last round, the crowd roars madly:

"Aquila wins! Bravo, bravo, Aquila!"

Bruco is slipping back inch by inch, struggling to hold his own. Giraffa is a length behind.

Once more they come to the dreaded Martino turn. The impetus gathered in the mad run down the track is so impelling that, in spite of themselves, both Bruco and Aquila dash straight across the track, narrowly escaping danger.

Luigi has been watching for this and is ready. Holding Astorre down he makes a wide curve and then springs to the inner rail.

The crowd sees the point and cheers "Giraffa, Giraffa," then settles into a silence of intense suspense.

As they thunder up the palace slope Bruco falters, falls back out of the race, while the gallant pair, the black and the chestnut, are off in front, the chestnut leading by a length.

Luigi bends to his work. Do they want to see speed and a horse, he will show them. He leans over the graceful neck that straightens to its task. Without whip or spur he urges, coaxing, commanding:

"Now, Astorre, show them. Go! For Giuliana—*go!*"

As if there were magic in that dear name, as if all else had been play, Astorre, galvanized, leaps to the stirrups of his rival, closes the space, and the pair in a thundering stride start down the home-stretch neck and neck.

The roar from the thousands is like that from armies in battle. Then a hush falls upon that vast crowd and they breathe as one man.

For a short distance only the horses hold nose and nose, then as surely as the sands rise in the hour-glass, if more quickly, Astorre's great stride gains on his rival. He passes first the heels, then the shoulders, then the head and—surges beyond, far beyond.

Aquila cuts into the gallant chestnut with whip and spur. He reaches out, far out, and lunges at Astorre with his vicious *nerbo*. A snarl and a shout rises from the seats, but the whip only cuts the air while Astorre, scatheless, sweeps grandly by the judges' stand three good lengths ahead.

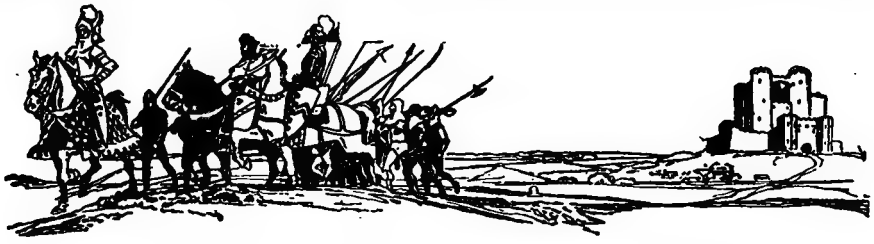
SHADES of all past hullabaloos, how that crowd did shout! Women cried and danced and shrieked and waved their fans. Men rushed into the ring and hugged one another. Twenty *carabiniere* sprang to Luigi and Astorre and surrounded them, for already disappointed Eagles were making for him to rend him.

With a jump Signor Mark cleared the seats to the track, commandeered a few middle-aged American men and women and some girls and led them in a ringing cheer.

And Giuliana, her beautiful face dazzling in the joy of the victory, pushed her way determinedly through the human barrier of police, friends, and a fringe of protesting rivals, straight to the main circle where the victors were receiving homage.

Luigi saw her coming and held out his hands. For a moment they stood smiling into each other's eyes; then, laughing and crying, she threw her arms around Astorre's neck, while Luigi patted her soothingly upon the shoulder and smiled proudly upon her and her gallant horse.

A call came from the judges' stand. Then in the midst of the crowd the three moved down the track to receive their reward—the *Palio*—the prize of the year.



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MURDERERS CROSS

by Thomas McMorrow

A PARTY of Americans, combing the hills for the murderer of an American miner, had found a gray heap lying in the drifting sand. It was a man, and alive, though dying of thirst. It was not Guiterez, the suspected Mexican for whom they searched, but it was a man, and they turned aside and took him to the neighboring Mexican town of Cristobal. There efforts were made to restore the fading life.

It was seen that the man was going to die. Cristobal accepted the fact with stoicism, Suarez, the innkeeper, with relief; the sufferer had proven more beast than human, and when speech had returned had employed it only to curse his benefactors. The man was stone-blind.

Felipa, the old servant of the inn in whose upper chamber the blind man lay, appeared at the street door.

"Tomas!" she called to the Indian hostler. "You must go at once to the monastery for a priest. He asks for one."

Tomas saddled a pony and rode out of town. He took the trail which led toward the mountain on whose flank was the widespread abode of the monastic order. Fifteen miles lay between the monastery and Cristobal, over a loose and rolling road, but Tomas drove the pony on. A man's eternal salvation rode on his pommel.

But his journey was short, for hardly had the town diminished behind him when he saw the familiar hooded figure of a monk coming toward him along the gray trail. Tomas dismounted and bared his head. The monk approached, made the sign of the cross in the air, and was passing on, his lemon-colored ankles swinging in long strides below the brown habit.

"Wait, Father," entreated Tomas. "There is a man dying in Cristobal."

"I can not stop, my son," said the priest, in a hoarse, whispering voice, as though a heavy cold had clutched his throat.

He was a huge man, with shoulders like a door.

"You must come," said Tomas firmly. "It is the blind man who was found in the hills, and who tosses all day, and curses, and calls for the priest."

"He calls for the priest?" repeated the monk. Dark eyes shone on Tomas from the shadow of the hood. "He calls for the priest, this man who was found in the hills?"

"And curses," nodded Tomas.

"I will come," said the priest. "Perhaps it was decreed that you should meet me."

He mounted the pony and goaded him with his sandaled feet into a brisk trot. Tomas ran behind, holding to the tail.

In Cristobal the blind man rolled from side to side on his bed, turning as though on a hinge. His blackened hands opened and closed, his strong jaws ground together, and a persistent rattle was the voice in his throat.

"The priest!" he gasped. "The priest!" And then he volleyed maledictions in whose scope the priest he called for found place.

Felipa peered through the doorway.

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She crossed herself constantly, for she well understood that the evil one waited in the room to seize the passing soul. At times she prayed aloud, to hearten herself and to daunt him.

A soft step sounded on the wooden stair. A brown habit ascended into view and she cried out gratefully, as a beleaguered garrison cries which beholds the coming of the relief.

From the depths of the brown hood black eyes glowed at Felipa. She crossed her arms and bowed as the victorious sign of the cross was made in the air.

"He still lives, my daughter?" asked the priest in his hoarse whisper.

"He lives, Father," she said, and led the way.

The blind man swung on his bed as Felipa opened the door. Like a sea-bound ship tugging at its cable his body tugged at the bed.

"The priest!" he rasped. "The priest!"

"He is here," announced Felipa joyfully. "Here is the priest from the monastery."

The blind man listened.

"From the monastery?"

"From the monastery," repeated Felipa.

The cracked lips of the blind man drew back from the stained teeth, and a hissing sound came forth. He was angry.

"No, no," he said. "I want none such priest."

Felipa went to his side, and put her thin yellow arm under his neck. She raised him up slightly, and touched a glass of cold water to his mouth.

"Drink, my child," she soothed him. "It is the priest."

The monk stood upon the threshold watching the sick man.

"It was Heaven," he murmured satisfiedly. "Yes, surely, it was Heaven sent me."

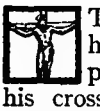
"Bring cotton," he said to Felipa in his whispering voice, "and a basin of clear water. And have you blessed candles, holy water and the sacred oils, my daughter?"

"They are here," replied the pleased Felipa, pointing with pride to the named articles standing on a chest.

The priest took a candle, and set it on a table beside the bed. He lit it, and the flame stood like a spearhead in the still air.

"You will leave us now, daughter," he said.

Felipa went reluctantly, looking back. In her woman's heart she felt rebellion against leaving to men the elemental business of dying. But she shut the door at last.



THE priest sat by the bedside. He had dropped the hood around his powerful neck. His elbow was upon his crossed knee, and his bearded chin rested in the heel of his hand. He looked upon the dark face of the blind man.

"You must confess, my son," he said sibilantly.

The blind man turned his face away.

"God is good," said the priest.

Silence was in the room for a space.

Then the priest spoke, always in a gentle whisper. He spoke of the joys of heaven, and of that Man who died that other men might not die forever.

The blind man was turned to the wall.

More sternly the monk spoke of torment, of the penalties to be exacted of those sinful ones who will not repent of their transgressions. And now the sick man moved uneasily. His fortitude bowed before the coming wrath.

He turned to the light rising from the table.

"I fear the fire, Father," he said.

"It is enough, my son," said the priest. "Such imperfect contrition will remit the punishment, if it leads you to repent and confess. Such is the gracious doctrine of Holy Mother Church, mindful always of human weakness."

"I am very ill, Father," groaned the sick man.

"You are, my son," said the priest. "But often the sacrament restores even the health of the body."

The blind man seemed to ponder.

"Listen then, Father," he said. "There is no one by to hear?"

"No one, my son," whispered the priest, leaning forward.

"If I live," said the blind man, "I will kill Guiterez, but if I die he escapes me. I will repent now and confess."

"God is merciful," said the monk.

"*Now* I do not confess," cautioned the blind man, "but tell you this as to another man, so that you may see justice done on Guiterez. Later I will confess, and then your mouth will be sealed, isn't it so?"

"You must forgive," said the priest, with a peculiar smile.

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"I will forgive," said the blind man, "but first I will have justice done on Guiterez! It is right that justice should be done. I talk to you now as one man to another man, and later I will confess under the sacrament. Listen, then.

"Two weeks ago Guiterez and I killed the American on the trail to Cristobal. From him we took as much gold as a mule could carry. We buried him in the sand and rode off. For three days we rode. In camp that night we played cards. I was drinking, and this Guiterez cheated.

"You know this Guiterez? He was sacristan in Mexico City when I met him. We called him the priest. He was not a priest, but so we called him. He was driven from Mexico for robbing a church, although he denies it, and since he has lived in the hills. Not the devil could play cards with Guiterez, but I was drinking, and I played with him. And he cheated. He won from me my share of the gold."

"Yes, my son," whispered the priest.

"On the following night we camped at a water-hole. We did not play, for I had nothing, and that pig, Guiterez, would not lend me any. Therefore, I rose up during the night, struck him twice with my pistol, and rode away taking his horse and the pack-mule with me. It was very wrong of him not to play with me."

"Yes, my son," nodded the monk.

"You are to know, Father," said the blind man, "that I am not dirt like this Guiterez! I am an honest clerk working in towns, and am a man of family. I am not a desert rat. And it was I who heard of the coming of the American, and laid the plan—for all of which Guiterez won from me my share, and then refused to play. Ah, that was very wrong of him! But I am not at home in the hills as is he, and soon I lost my way. My water went, and then I killed the mule and the led horse."

"And the gold?" breathed the monk, leaning over.

"What of the gold?" said the blind man stubbornly.

"You must confess, my son," said the priest. "Restitution must be made."

"No," said the blind man. "If I live I will return and take it, and if I die no one shall have it, least of all that cursed Guiterez."

"You must confess!" said the priest in a menacing tone. "Else you will not be forgiven!"

The blind man lay quite still and rigid for a space. Then he put out his skinny hand.

"Water," he begged. "Water!"

The monk put the glass to his lips, and the blind man reached up and grasped the confessor's thick and hairy wrist. He did not drink, but sank back with a contented sigh.

"Ah! The gold, you ask?"

"The gold," repeated the priest.

"I made a drawing of the place and of the hills about before my sight failed. You will have justice done on Guiterez if he is not dead?"

"You shall have justice, my son," said the priest.

"Look then in my jacket pocket which is there in the chest," said the blind man. "It is there that I think the cursed old hag put it."

The priest arose, and hurried to the chest. He threw back the lid, and thrust his shaggy head inside.

"The jacket is not here," he said.

"Tell me what you see," requested the blind man, bending his neck with a painful effort to catch the answer.

"There is women's clothing here," said the priest, forced to speak in a louder voice. "There is no jacket!"

The blind man sank back to his hard pillow. He was smiling. The priest ran to him, and shook his shoulder.

"Quick!" he urged. "You must confess!"

With a mighty struggle the blind man came back from the reaching shadows.

"Bend over me," he whispered. "Raise me up!"

The priest put his muscular forearm beneath the shoulder, and lifted. The blind man came almost to a sitting posture. His under hand went jerkily beneath the pillow. It returned.

"Heaven has sent you to me," he sighed. "I prayed!"

And with the words he fired a pistol full into the priest's breast.

The monk lurched up convulsively, clutched at vacancy, teetered on his sandaled heels, and fell to the floor.

Felipa threw open the door.

"Help, help!" she screamed, running to the stair-head. "Come quickly—the priest has been killed!"

People from below came leaping up the stairs. They crowded into the room. The monk lay upon the floor. The blind man's

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dark head was upon his pillow, and the light of the candle struck out his smiling profile in yellow. His canine teeth showed between his lips.

Suarez, the innkeeper, bent over the figure of the monk, and then dropped heavily the head which he had lifted.

"Ah," he shouted. "Here is no monk. It is that Guiterez, who is called the priest. See—he was fleeing in this robe which he got at the monastery, and Tomas brought him here. There is the finger of God in this!"

The company seized the body of Guiterez, called the priest, and dragged it down the stairs, its heels knocking. But first they stripped off the profaned robe so that no disrespect should be shown. They cast the carcass from the door like offal, and it lay tumbled against the adobe wall of the inn. Wolfish dogs came and nosed it, growling.

PAWNEE ROCK

by E. A. BRININSTOOL

ONE of the most noted landmarks along the picturesque old Santa Fé Trail was Pawnee Rock, situated in what is now Barton County, Kansas. Bathed in blood, it has been the scene of more encounters with hostile Indians, particularly the Pawnees and Cheyennes, than probably any other single spot in the United States. It was the one locality along the Santa Fé Trail always dreaded by the traders, trappers, emigrants and all who passed over it. It is said to have been named by Kit Carson.

Because of its excellent characteristics for an ambush, it was a favorite spot for savages to lay in wait for the richly-loaded caravans plying between Independence, Missouri, and Santa Fé, New Mexico, who would stampede the stock, kill the teamsters and make off with their booty.

The country about Pawnee Rock was always debatable territory—while it was not claimed by any one tribe, it was regarded as open country for all to hunt within its borders, as its fertile grounds were a favorite grazing-spot for the millions of buffalo which roamed the plains in the early days of the trail. It was when the plains tribes would gather for their annual hunt to lay in the Winter's supply of meat that bloody conflicts were sure to follow.

Back in the days when the Santa Fé trading was at its zenith, the Pawnees were regarded as the most formidable tribe on the eastern central plains, and the freighters and emigrants could always calculate on a fight either at Pawnee Rock, the crossing of the Walnut fork of the Pawnee or at Little and Big Coon creeks.

But now all that is changed. The whistle of the Santa Fé trains has superseded the whoop of the Pawnee and Cheyenne.

During the year 1912 the Woman's Kansas Day Club completed the purchase and marking of the historic spot. The celebrated rock stands nine miles northeasterly from Larned, just over the line in Barton County. The purpose of the organization of the Woman's Kansas Day Club was to promote patriotism and preserve history by just such acts as this saving of Pawnee Rock from the vandal and desecrator of history. At its annual meeting in 1908, the club decided to acquire by purchase the historic rock and five acres adjoining, and turn it over to the State for care and preservation, for already the ruthless hand of the homesteader had been tearing down the rock for building purposes.

It was a difficult undertaking because of peculiar local circumstances, but after the club had made some effort toward acquiring the rock, the owner, Benjamin Unruh, agreed to donate it, providing the women would raise three thousand dollars to improve the site as a park. Fifteen hundred dollars was expended on the monument to be placed on the rock.

A beautiful granite shaft twenty-eight feet high now stands on the top of this famous old historic landmark. The monument was unveiled May 24, 1912. A buffalo head and an Indian head are carved upon the shaft. Eight thousand persons attended the unveiling, and thus one of the most famous spots in all the history of the West is preserved for all time to come.

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PARTNERSHIP

by Harrison R. Howard

Author of "Afraid of the Bar," "Up-Stream," etc.

MARRIAGE and partnership are institutions often compared; but the similarities between them are rapidly becoming fewer. Today, in cases of infidelity to the marriage vow, the unwritten law is not so frequently appealed to as once; but in cases of infidelity to partnership the good old order still remains. As often as in days gone by, a shot is fired; twelve good men and true mumble something about "justifiable homicide"; and one partner goes forth in search of a new object for his released man-heart; while the other goes in search of a new form for his released soul.

"Cod-Liver-Oil" Haynes awoke with a start; sat bolt upright in the bunk; and listened to the two voices in the next room. His first thought was that neither of the two speakers knew he was there. He had returned unexpectedly from a trip down to the river; his partner had not been at the cabin when he returned; the two who were talking had come in after he had fallen asleep. There was no other explanation than this: his partner had turned traitor.

Cod-Liver-Oil Haynes reached under the pillow and secured his revolver. A suffocating lump rose in his throat. His partner, "Mister" Lumpus O'Day had turned! He swallowed with difficulty and strained to recognize the other man's voice.

It was Peterson. Just as readily as he realized this, did he recognize the whole fabric of treachery being woven in the next room. Peterson represented the Outpost Timber Corporation. That company it was which had attempted to swallow up the timber claim belonging to himself and O'Day. Failing, they had offered to buy; but Haynes had replied that he and his partner would starve there among their timber before they'd do honest business with dishonest parties.

So now, believing that he was still down on the far-away river, the Outpost had sent Peterson to try his hand at making Mister Lumpus O'Day sell him out.

Cod-Liver-Oil Haynes slipped to the edge of the bunk. The lump in his throat

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had grown inestimably larger and heavier. His partner, O'Day, had turned! He recalled O'Day's pet yarn: the one about faith between partners. It was called the "Cockroach Story."

Cockroaches, according to O'Day's little tale, formed partnerships just as men do. And between cockroach partners there was absolute faith. They trusted each other to the last peal of doom. Indeed, so great was their faith in each other that one partner would even permit the other to fix his claws behind his ears—the most delicate portion of a cockroach's person—and would not protest, although the slightest pressure there meant instant death.

Lumpus O'Day had been very serious about this tale of faith. He swore it was a scientific fact as well as a "gorgeous" prose poem. Cod-Liver-Oil had often chided him about it; and O'Day grew sensitive and wounded under his partner's chafing laughter. So in the end, to salve his partner's touched feelings, Haynes had sworn that he, too, believed it to a word.

And now as he sat listening there on the edge of the bunk, his partner's yarn came back in mockery to Cod-Liver-Oil Haynes. He rose abruptly, glanced at the cartridge chamber of the revolver, and stole across the narrow room to the closed door.

Through the cracks in the rude panel, Peterson's voice reached him distinctly.

"You know as well as I do, O'Day," the Outpost scout was saying, "that this offer I'm making for your half of the claim is more than you'll ever get by sticking to Haynes and selling together."

Haynes peered through the crack in the panel which commanded a view of the entire room. His partner was nodding concurrence to Peterson's words.

"That's gospel, Pete," O'Day mumbled, deep in thought.

Peterson, perched on the very edge of his chair leaned forward persuasively.

"And why should you hesitate to sell out secretly? It's all bosh! Didn't Haynes do you dirt? We offered him a good price, and he wouldn't sell. And you needed the money. There was McDonald's girl down on the river waiting for you; and you couldn't marry her without money. But Haynes wouldn't sell. I sort of suspect Haynes has his eye on that girl, too!"

Haynes saw his partner start from his chair, his face flushed and unsteady. But O'Day paused, hung a moment in indecision, then fell back to his hunched position in the chair.

"Maybe you're right, Pete," he murmured after a pause.

Cod-Liver-Oil stiffened perceptibly. A shudder ran through him; and he swallowed again with marked difficulty.

"Now, O'Day," Peterson was hurrying on, "I've got the check in my pocket. You've waited long enough. You deserve better treatment than to be held back from marrying McDonald's girl."

"She's a rare beauty, that lass of McDonald's," Lumpus O'Day murmured.

"Of course she is," Peterson concurred. "And Haynes is probably down at the river this moment pressing his suit."

Again Haynes saw his partner stir uncomfortably, only to lapse quickly back in the chair.

"Cod-Liver is powerful handsome compared to me," Lumpus muttered.

"Sure he is," pursued Peterson. "And if you don't sell and marry her pretty quick he'll have her himself."

Cod-Liver's partner nodded to this. The lump in Haynes's throat rose suffocatingly again. He remembered O'Day's cockroach story of great faith, and with difficulty he restrained a bitter laugh.

"Well, O'Day, what do you say? Want this check?"

Haynes watched his partner tensely. Lumpus rose to his feet and crossed to the door which led out of the cabin. This he opened, and leaning heavily against the casing, stared out into the bluish flood of moonlight. A virginal forest hemmed them all about; but Haynes knew that his partner was gazing beyond—far beyond—down to the great river—and the lass of McDonald's.

"I wonder if she's well," he murmured from the doorway.

Peterson rose to his feet.

"There's an epidemic down on the river. Maybe she's caught it. Well, tomorrow you can bring her up in the hills and this air will fix her."

The Outpost scout took from his pocket a bundle of papers. From this he extracted a legal document and a long, blue-colored check. He smiled over this operation.

"All right, O'Day," he said. "Your signature means McDonald's girl."

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COD-LIVER-OIL HAYNES raised the revolver and directed it against the crack in the door. O'Day turned from the outer door, crossed to the table and glanced down at the papers there. For a moment his hand rested on the blue check and his eyes wandered out through the doorway, beyond the encroaching timber circle, down to the great river.

"Where do I sign, Pete?"

Cod-Liver-Oil Haynes brought his revolver into line; and his finger adjusted itself upon the trigger.

Peterson indicated a line on the larger paper and drew forth a fountain pen. Lumpus O'Day nodded and sat down.

"No, you keep the pen a moment. I want a written offer from you before I sell."

Peterson stiffened instantly.

"Oh, come, now, O'Day, that's not necessary. You have my verbal offer."

"It was your own words, Peterson, that I shouldn't trust my partner, so why should I trust any one else. It's got to be understood that you made the offer to buy; not that I made the offer to sell!"

"It's all the same legally, O'Day," Peterson protested.

"But not the same morally."

Lumpus O'Day was staring again through the open door. Peterson hesitated in indecision, then with an impatient shrug of his shoulders, scribbled and signed a note on a piece of blank paper. Then he rose, handed the paper to O'Day, and with it the fountain pen.

"All right, O'Day; now sign the paper and take the check."

Mister Lumpus O'Day read the note slowly, laid it down upon the table, and took up the pen. Cod-Liver-Oil Haynes took aim, and the hammer of the revolver slowly ascended.

O'Day's eyes were through the open door once more.

"Now you'll be happy, lass!" he murmured.

Peterson leaned forward smiling.

"Of course she will, O'Day!"

Cod-Liver-Oil Haynes stifled a low sob. He readjusted his aim and slowly drew the trigger. But half-way the hammer stopped; the revolver dropped to his side, and he peered aghast through the crack.

Lumpus O'Day had sprung to his feet.

"She'll be happy, will she?" he cried, not to the far-away river this time, but to the startled Outpost scout.

With a swift movement he picked up Peterson's note and stuffed it into his pocket. Then he gathered up the check and the legal paper, and crumpling them, cast them into the fire on the hearth.

"No, she won't be happy for the reason you mean, Peterson," Lumpus O'Day cried, leaning menacingly across the table. "She'll be happy to know the lies you told her are lies. And I've got your signature on it. You thought you'd just win her for yourself. Told her I was crooked; that I was trying to sell out behind my partner's back. She almost believed you—believed that I was after you to buy instead of you after me to sell. It may be the same legally but different morally. I guess this little paper in my pocket will prove it.

"You thought because my partner was miles away you could kill two birds with one stone: buy our tract of timber, and turn McDonald's lass against me. Peterson, you got just five seconds to be counted among those not present. If you are still here then, I'll do what I'd have done at the first word out of you, if I was half the man my partner is. Get out quick or you'll find out who is the partner of Cod-Liver-Oil Haynes!"

Cod-Liver-Oil's eyes were too blurred to see the Outpost scout's exit. He glanced down at the revolver in his hand, and a faint shudder ran through him once more.

A few moments later he opened the door and stepped noiselessly into the big room. Lumpus O'Day had his back turned, and was talking to the picture of a smiling girl on the rude mantel above the fireplace.

"Maybe you would be happier, honey, if we was to get married tomorrow; but you see I'm a partner to old Cod-Liver-Oil; and partners has simply got to come first."

Cod-Liver-Oil Haynes coughed circumspectly.

"Hello, Lumpus," he greeted.

Mister O'Day whirled about from the picture on the mantel.

"Hello, Cod-Liver."

Haynes studied the toe of his boot with intense interest.

"Do you know, Lumpus, I was just thinking about that cockroach yarn."

Lumpus O'Day started perceptibly.

"There's nothing to it, Cod-Liver. Honest, it was just a fish story."

"It was good where they pair off as partners."

"It was just an or'n'ry lie, Cod-Liver!"

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"The thing I like best about the yarn," Haynes went on as though he had not heard, "is about their faith in each other—how one of 'em lets the other put his fangs behind his ears—the most sensitive and delicate part of a cockroach's anatomy——"

"Can't you believe me, Cod-Liver, it's just a plain lie!"

Cod-Liver-Oil Haynes laid the revolver on the table, and put his hand impulsively on his partner's shoulder.

"It's a scientific fact, too; I—I looked it up. Faith! Claws in the most sensitive and delicate place! Say, Lumpus, ain't it a fact the cockroach has the right idea? Gosh!"

THE FIGHT BETWEEN THE EAGLE AND THE SWAN

by **THOMAS S. MILLER**

THE Upper Niger sprawls out in broad, shimmering lagoons sprinkled with sand islets crested with feather-plumed pampas. The sun crawls across a vast and empty sky. But for the sluggish current the world seems marking time. Still life and a penetrating silence. A lone baobab rises from the elephant grass at the river's edge like a pillar of smoke which spreads out into a stationary smoke-cloud.

A close-up picture shows what looks like the stump of a broken-off branch on a stout limb flung out over the water. But the stump has a pair of strong, wide-awake eyes and cruel beak and talons. "Protective colorization" the naturalists call the eagle's camouflage. Hour on hour it humps there, outdoing in patience a swan that stands at the edge of an islet, as still as if it were painted on a Japanese screen, its long neck arched, its small bird-eyes intent on the flowing water, its beak slightly parted. It waits the unlucky fish that shall swim within striking distance.

The eagle waits the swan's flight, or the flight of some other swan it may decoy and which chance might bring under the baobab. "At the bottom of Patience, there is Heaven," runs the proverb of the natives of the Niger. "At the bottom of Patience, there is Food." The lonely sun steals an hour out of the day.

Suddenly the swan dives, its long neck parting the water resistance to its tapering body, its webbed feet propelling. It comes up with a wriggling fish and rises on a slant from the water, with slow, powerful wing action, heading for its nest where mother swan and perhaps little swans are patiently waiting. Unluckily its course takes it under the innocent-appearing baobab. The eagle drops like a plummet. It screams as it drops to terror-paralyze its victim.

The swan dips to water, winging wildly. If it can reach the river the eagle will be no match for it. The eagle strikes upward with beak and talons at the snowy breast, streaking the down with red blood. The swan beats the eagle off with its wings and flies upward. The latter pursues swiftly, striking again and again at the breast, tearing off white down which falls like gentle snowflakes and floats lightly on the slow current.

The swan sends screaming calls for help out into the vast silence. Again and again it dives for water, and again and again the eagle strikes upward from underneath. Repeated blows from the swan's powerful wings have dazed the eagle. But the swan is fast losing its fighting strength. It reserves its wing power to beat off its opponent, trusting to gravitation to reach the river.

The eagle makes a last desperate attack and digs its talons into the downy breast. Shrieking with the pain, the swan makes no further attempt to escape by flight but coasts down to water. The eagle knows its danger, but still clings desperately, until it looks like certain drowning, when it drops away, screaming its rage, and wings with heavy effort back to the baobab. The swan hits the water heavily and struggles for the nearest shore. A mouth-agape crocodile makes a grab at it and misses by inches.

The swan struggles up the bank, and rests there panting and recuperating its strength. A leopard steals down on it through the elephant grass. The swan sees its danger in nick of time and struggles to water, where it floats for an hour, then rises heavily and wings slowly for its nest.

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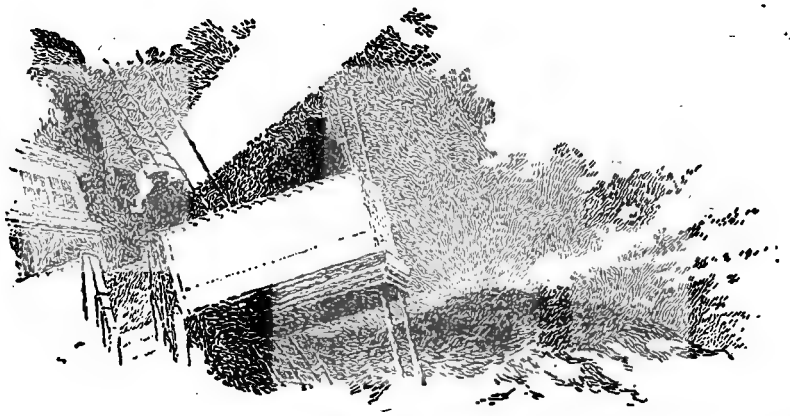

THE REAL THING

by William Hope Hodgson

Author of "The Albatross," "Jack Grey, Second Mate," etc.

"BIG liner on fire in 55.43 N. and 32.19 W.," shouts the captain, diving into his chart-room. "Here we are! Give me the parallels!"

The first officer and the captain figure busily for a minute.

"North, 15 west," says the master.

"North, 15 west," assents the first officer, flinging down his pencil. "A hundred and seventeen miles, dead in the wind."

"Come on!" says the captain, and the two of them dash out of the chart-room into the roaring black night and up on to the bridge.

"North, 15 west!" the master shouts in the face of the burly helmsman. "Over with her, smart."

"North, 15 west, sir!" shouts back the big quartermaster, and whirls the spokes to starboard, with the steering-gear engine roaring.

The great vessel swings 'round against the night, smiting the faces of the great seas with her seventy-feet-high bows.

Crash! A roar of water aboard, as a hundred phosphorescent tons of sea-water hurl inboard out of the darkness, and rush aft along the lower decks, boiling and surging over the hatchways, capstans, deck-fittings, and 'round the corners of the deck-houses.

The ship hits the fifty-mile-an-hour gale, full in the face; and the engine telegraph stands at full speed. The master has word with the king of the underworld, the chief engineer, and the chief goes below himself to take charge, just as the master has taken charge on deck.

There is fresh news from the operator's room. The vessel somewhere out in the night and the grim storm is the S. S. *Vanderfield*, with sixty first-class passengers and seven hundred steerage; and she is alight forward. The fire has gained a strong hold; and they have already lost three boats, smashed to pieces, as they tried to launch them.

The life-saving apparatus is not so highly efficient as war and the constant menace of the submarine are later to make it.

"—— these old-fashioned davits!" says the master, as he reads the wireless operator's notes. "They won't lift a boat out clear of the ship's side, if she's rolling a bit. The boats in a ship are just ornaments, if you've not got proper machinery for launching them. We've got the new derricks, and we can lower a boat so she strikes the water forty feet clear of the side, instead of dashing to pieces like a sixty-foot pendulum against our sides."

He shouts a question over his shoulder, standing there by the binnacle—

"What's she doing, Mr. Andrews?"

"Twenty and three-quarters knots, sir,"

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says the second officer, who has been in charge. "But the chief's raising her revolutions every minute. She's nearly on to the twenty-one now."

"And even if we lick that, we'll be over five hours reaching her," mutters the master to himself.

Meanwhile, the wireless is beating a message of hope across a hundred miles of night and storm and wild waters.

"Coming! The R.M.S. *Cornucopia* is proceeding at full speed in your direction. Keep us informed how you are."

Then follows a brief unofficial statement, a heart to heart word between the young men operators of the two ships, across the hundred-mile gulf of black seas:

"Buck up, old man. We'll do it yet! We're simply piling into the storm, like a giddy cliff. She's doing close on twenty-one, they've just told me, against this breeze and the chief's down in the stokeholes himself with a fourteen-inch wrench and a double-watch of stokers. Keep a stiff upper lip. I'll let you know if we speed up any more."

The operator has been brief and literal, and has rather understated the facts. The mighty ship is now hurling all her fifty-thousand-ton bulk through the great seas, at something approaching a twenty-two-knot stride; and the speed is rising.

Down in the engine-room and stokeholes, the chief, minus his overalls, is a coatless demigod, with life in one hand and a fourteen-inch wrench in the other; not that this wrench is in any way necessary; for the half-naked men stream willing sweat in a silence broken only by the rasp of the big shovels and the clang of the furnace-doors, and the chief's voice.

The chief is young again; young and a king tonight, and the rough days of his youth have surged back over him. He has picked up the wrench unconsciously, and he walks about, twirling it in his fist. The stokers work the better for the homely sight of it and for the sharp tang of his words, that miss no man of them all.

And the great ship feels the effect. Her giant tread has broken into an everlasting thunder, as her shoulders hurl the seas to port and starboard, in shattered hills of water that surge to right and left in half-mile drifts of phosphorescent foam, under the roll of her Gargantuan flanks.

THE first hour has passed, and there have been two fresh messages from that vessel, flaming far off, lost and alone, out in the wild roar of the waters. There has been an explosion forward in the burning ship, and the fire has come aft as far as the main bunkers. There has been an attempt to lower two more of the boats, and each has been smashed to flinders against the side of the burning ship, as she rolled.

The operator in the burning ship asks a personal question that has the first touch of real despair in it; and there ensues another little heart-to-heart talk between the two young men.

"Honest now, do you think you can do it?"

"Sure," says the operator in the *Cornucopia*. "We're doing what we've never done at sea before in heavy weather. We're touching within a knot of our trial speed—we're doing twenty-four and a half knots; and we're doing it against this! Honor bright, old man! I'll not deceive you at a time like this.

"I never saw anything like what we're doing. All the engineers are in the engine-room, and all the officers are on the boat-deck, overhauling the boats and gear. We've got those new forty-foot boat-derricks, and we can shove a boat into the water with 'em, with the ship rolling half-under. The old man's on the bridge; and I guess you're just going to be saved all right. You ought to hear us. I tell you, man, she's just welting the seas to a pulp, and skating along to you on the top of them."

The operator is right. The great ship seems alive tonight, along all her shapely eight hundred feet of marvelous, honest, beautiful steel. Her enormous bows take the seas as on a horn, and hurl them into roaring, screaming drifts of foam. She is singing a song, fore and aft, and the thunder of her gray steel flanks is stupendous, as she spurns the mutilated seas and the gale and the bleak intolerable miles into her wake.

The second and third hours pass and part of the fourth, in an intermittent thunder of speed. And the speed has been further increased; for now the *Cornucopia* is laying the miles astern, twenty-nine in each hour; her sides drunken with black water and spume — a dripping, league-conquering,

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fifty-thousand-tons hape of steel and steam and brains, going like some stupendous angel of help across the black desolation of the night.

INCREDIBLY far away, down on the black horizons of the night, there shows a faint red glow. There is shouting along the bridge.

"There she is!" goes the word fore and aft. "There she is!"

Meanwhile the wireless messages pulse across the darkness. The fire is burning with terrible fury. The fore-part of the *Vanderfield's* iron skin is actually glowing red-hot in places. Despair is seizing every one. Will the *Cornucopia* never, never come?

The young operators talk, using informal words:

"Look out to the south of you for our searchlights," replies the man in the wireless room of the *Cornucopia*. "The old man's going to play it against the clouds, to let you see we're coming. Tell 'em all to look out for it. It'll cheer them up. We're walking along through the smother like an express. Man! Man! We're doing our trial speed, twenty-five and a half knots, against this! Do you realize it—against this! Look along to the south. Now!"

There is a hissing on the fore-bridge, quite unheard in the roar of the storm; and then there shoots out across the miles of night and broken seas, the white fan-blaze of the searchlight. It beats like an enormous baton against the black canopy of the monstrous storm-clouds, beating to the huge, thundering melody of the roar and onward hurl of the fifty-thousand-ton rescuer, tossing the billows to right and left, as she strides through the miles.

And what a sight it is, in the glare of the great light, as it descends and shows the huge seas! A great cliff of black water rears up, and leaps forward at the ship's bows. There is a thunderous impact, and the ship has smitten the great sea in twain, and tossed it boiling and roaring on to iron flanks; and is treading it into the welter of foam that surrounds her on every side—a raging testimony, of foam and shattered seas, to the might of her mile-devouring stride.

Another, and another, and another blank, moving cliff rises up out of the water-valleys, which she strides across; and each is broken and tossed mutilated from her shapely, mighty, unafraid shoulders.

A message is coming, very weak and faint, through the receivers:

"We've picked up your searchlights, old man. It's comforted us mightily; but we can't last much longer. The dynamo's stopped. I'm running on my batteries now——"

It dwindles off into silence, broken by fragments of a message, projected too weakly to be decipherable.

"LOOK at her!" the officers shout to one another on the bridge; for the yell of the wind and the ship-thunder is too great for ordinary speech to be heard.

They are staring through their glasses. Under a black canopy of bellied storm-clouds, shot with a dull-red glowing, there is tossed up on the backs of far-away seas, a far-off ship, seeming incredibly minute, because of the distance; and from her fore-part spouts a swaying tower of flame.

"We'll never do it in time!" says the young sixth officer into the ear of the fifth.

The burning ship is now less than three miles away and the black backs of the great seas are splashed with huge ever-shifting reflections.

Through the glasses it is possible now to see the details of the tremendous hold the fire has got on the ship and, away aft, the huddled masses of the six hundred odd remaining passengers.

As they watch, one of the funnels disappears and a great spout of flame and sparks shoots up.

"It'll go through her bottom!" shouts the second officer; but they know this does not happen; for she still floats.

Suddenly comes the thrilling cry of "Out derricks!" and there is a racing of feet, and shouted orders. Then the great derricks swing out from the ship's side, a boat's length above the boat-deck. They are hinged, and supported down almost to the draft line of the ship. They reach out forty feet clear of the ship's side.

The *Cornucopia* is bursting through the final miles of wild seas, and then the telegraph bell rings, and she slows down, not more than ten or twelve hundred yards to windward of the burning hulk, which rises and falls, a stupendous spectacle on the waste of black seas.

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The fifty-thousand-ton racer has performed her noble work, and now the rest lies with the boats and the men.

The searchlight flashes down on to the near water, and the boats shoot out in the "travelers," then are dropped clear of the mighty flanks of the mother ship.

The leviathan lies to the windward of them, to break the force of the seas, and oil bags are put out.

The people in the burning *Vanderfield* greet the *Cornucopia* with mad cheers. The women are heaved bodily into the seas, on the ends of lines. They float in their cork jackets. Men take children in their arms and jump, similarly equipped. And all are easily picked up by the boats, in the blaze of the rescuer's searchlights that gleam on leagues of ocean, strangely subdued by the floods of oil which the big ship is pumping on to the seas.

Everywhere lies the strange sheen of oil, here in a sudden valley of brine, unseen, or there on the shoulder of some monstrous wave, suddenly eased of its deadliness or again, the same fluorescence swirls over some half-league of eddy-flattened ocean, resting between efforts—tossing minor oil-soothed ridges into the tremendous lights.

Then the *Cornucopia* steams to leeward of the burning ship, and picks up her boats. She takes the rescued passengers aboard, and returns to windward; then drops the boats again, and repeats the previous operations, until every man, woman and child is saved.

As the last boat swings up at the end of the great derricks aboard the *Cornucopia* there is a final volcano of flame from the burning ship, lighting up the black belly of the sky into billowing clouds of redness. There falls the eternal blackness of the night. The *Vanderfield* has gone.

The great ship swings 'round through the night, with her hundreds saved and begins to sing again in her deep heart, laying the miles and the storm astern once more in a deep low thunder.

ON THE ISLANDS

by GEORGE GATLIN

TEN years on the Islands
And you're mad;
Not a spark of decency—
Oh, it's sad;
Can't recall one sober day
That you've had;
You've let the tropics get you
And you're bad.

Ten years on the Islands
And you fell,
Hardly conscious of surrender
To the spell.
You're eaten up with leprosy,
Traders tell,
You're a comber of the beaches—
Gone to hell.

Ten years on the Islands,
It's too long
To preserve one's sense of right
And of wrong.
The tropic spell is gentle
But it's strong,
It feeds the soul on lotus
Till it's gone.

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THE BROOCH OF TLAYA

A Three-Part Story

PART I

by Anne Throop Craig and Louise Rice

ASLOW, sullen wind ruffled the water as Fedalm watched her father's great sea barge being rowed away from the shore.

Strangely still her father lay under the trailing, somber robes of his couch, arising not to wave his hand to her, nor turning one glance back toward her as the barge melted into the gray evening mists.

Fedalm could not understand how this could be. Never had her father left her, before, without a kiss from his bearded lips; never had he been carried to his barge, with closed eyes and rigid knees. The girl had not been allowed to look on death in all her life beneath her father's sheltering hand, and, in truth, she knew not of it, save as a name.

A very beautiful thing she was, in her slim and youthful grace, with her long red hair sweeping to her thighs from the jeweled band which confined it to her brows. Among the throng which lined the cliff behind her many eyes turned upon her, especially such as had hair of the color of her own: the tall, red-headed Norsemen of Queen Tlaya's domain, who towered far over the short, heavy, dark people of the queen's race.

Tlaya was much taller than a Pictish woman usually was, and as handsome as she was haughty. She stood beside her daughter, her arms folded on her breast, and her head held none the lower in that she watched her lord depart to the Land of No Return.

Eric the Pale, the stern, gray-haired Norseman who had had charge of the household of the princess since her early childhood, looked long after the queen's stately form, as she strode up the cliff-side, accepting no more than the most perfunctory aid from the two henchmen who respectfully touched her elbows. Then he looked back at the girl who still stood, looking out to sea, a lonely, touching figure, enwrapped in the gray, creeping mist.

All those who had been on the cliff-side had followed the queen, save only Eric, and an old woman who stood near him.

"Let us go to her," Eric said, in a low tone, "it is not fitting that she should be left thus without attendance."

The old woman nodded and put her hand within his arm for the descent.

"When had she ever fitting reverence, save when our lord was by? What chance has she now, Eric, to receive aught that is rightful for her since the Great and Good One has departed?"

"There are those among us who do not forget!" Eric muttered, in her ear, first glancing about to be sure that no loiterer was within hearing distance.

The old woman returned his meaning glance with one of equal intelligence. They stopped back of the girl, waiting for her to turn, but when she did not, the old woman touched her, with the gentle familiarity of a sure love.

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"Come away, Sweeting," she said, "the night grows cold and your robes are overthin."

Fedalm did not reply. Very slowly, like one in a trance, she laid the tips of her white fingers upon Eric's shoulder and followed the path upward which her mother had taken.

On the great lawn before the hall of state the games and feastings with which the passing of a chief was always celebrated, were already under way. To Fedalm, winding her course among the jostling groups, there was no significance in the preparations.

Several times before she had seen torches blazing in a circle about the high lawn, while the warriors and youths exhibited their prowess within the ring of light, and the maidens of the household fluttered their admiration and approval; it usually meant that a feast day had been granted by Kapultep, in honor of some secret occasion of Druidic worship, which none but the priests and priestesses understood. But on such occasions there were shoutings and laughter, dances and love making, not this set, formal, grave playing at play, with faces pale, and unsmiling eyes!

Fedalm felt the terror and loneliness which had crept upon her at the beach strike deep into her heart. Unheeding the attentive, pitying looks which were again and again bent upon her she went forward, walking slower and slower, and trembling, so that the old woman ventured to put an arm about her slender waist.

Fedalm leaned against it, soothed by the old, dear touch. It was against that arm that her childish sobs had been stilled, it was in its embrace that she had endured the one sickness of her youth, it was against its loving pressure that she still, nightly, fell asleep. The feel of it banished for a second, the black despair which was poisoning her.

They were now opposite the great hall and Fedalm started to hurry by, for it was seldom she entered there, save when her father sent for her to sit beside him. But a glance into the interior halted her, abruptly. Her mother sat in the great chair where none but the chief might sit, under penalty of death! And Kapultep, the gaunt, mummy-like Druid, sat in the chair which her mother had always used.

Eric and the old woman looked within, too, and their eyes blazed with fury, for they understood the meaning of what they saw; but to Fedalm it meant only that her fear and foreboding were sharpened. But once had her mother ever sat in the great chair, and that had been when her father lay near to death, so that his queen represented him at the half-yearly tribal gathering.

Fedalm stayed her two retainers where they were with a gesture of her hand, instinctively imperious, for all its graciousness, and then she went forward and stood in the wide doorway.

THE queen, whose eyes lost little, instantly saw her. She came swiftly down from her seat of state and confronted the girl.

"What do you here, Fedalm?" she demanded.

Fedalm timidly put out her hand and fingered the rope of uncut stones which was her mother's girdle, and the tears welled up in her eyes. Never, since she could remember, had her mother ever shown any affection for her, except, perhaps, a sort of indifferent, appraising pride in her growing beauty; never had she been more to the girl than a distant and terrifying figure of regal grace and unlimited power, which must, under all circumstances, be propitiated and feared.

But now, oppressed by a sense of a hovering terror, the girl yearned toward her mother's arms, but she did not dare to throw herself into them. All she could do was to lift imploring eyes at the dark, handsome face, feeling more than ever a stranger to it.

The frown which lay on Tlaya's face deepened.

"Speak!" she commanded.

Cold as the queen had always been to Fedalm, she had never spoken harshly to her before. The sharp, hostile tone brought all of the girl's fear to a focus. She tried to calm herself, tried to choke down her sobs, but she could not. Pushing against her mother's unresponsive arm she cried, aloud, until Tlaya silenced her with a fierce grip on her delicate hand.

"Cease!" she said, and so great was the power of her unbending will that Fedalm obeyed. "Now speak, if you can, or wish," she added, seeing that the girl was quieter.

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"My father—" stammered Fedalm—"my father—oh, tell me where he has gone. And why? My heart misgives me, O my mother! He spoke not to me. When did he ever leave us before that he spoke not his last word to me?"

"When, indeed!" replied Tlaya, sarcastically. "How many times have I stood by, silent and ignored, while your father gave to you such attention as no child should have! Well, that has happened for the last time, thank the gods."

Forgetting her fear of her mother, Fedalm clutched at her.

"Oh, what—what can you mean, my mother? In pity, speak. My father——"

Even the hard heart of Tlaya, in which jealousy of the young princess was the blackest spot, could not quite keep down a throb of compassion.

"You are indeed a fool, though a piteous one," she said, less harshly. "How is it possible that you do not understand about your father?"

The girl, white and still, said no word, but her eyes implored her mother to say whatever dreadful thing she knew.

Tlaya looked down at her daughter, and something less fierce and hard shone in her eyes. She returned the pressure of the girl's hands, almost gently.

"Child, your father has gone to the Land of No Return, behind the Western Sea," she said, "and all that remains to you and to me is the thought of him, in our hearts."

Fedalm stood a long time, holding to her mother, trying to steady herself, amidst the blackness and the fiery streaks of light which seemed to encompass her; for, truth to tell, she was nearer to fainting than she had ever been in her young life. At last, with a sigh, her head sank forward on her breast, and Tlaya held her up, as she beckoned to Eric and the old woman, who had come anxiously forward.

"Take her in your charge," she said to them, "and do you see that she comes no more to me until her mind is restored and at peace," she added, to the old woman, who answered naught, but tenderly held the limp hand of her foster-child as Eric bore her off toward her own house.

Within the hall of state Tlaya returned to her seat, gloomy and stern. The old Druid, who had not stirred from his place, waited punctiliously for her to speak, but his constant, shifting glances told of his impatience and of his scorn of the convention.

At last Tlaya looked at him.

"'Tis an unruly bird that will be growing up in my nest," she said, bitterly. "Now that she knows that her father is dead, she will look to me to proclaim her as the heir. And it is sure that some babbling fool among the Norse will tell her——"

The Druid's quick gesture, slight as it was, checked the queen's impetuous words. She had forgotten that a number of her retainers sat at the other end of the hall; not near enough to hear, it would seem, unless one of them were listening, with sharpened ears. Nevertheless, she was glad that the thing which was in her mind had not been spoken, but she was vexed, too, that the Druid should show keener wits and more self-possession than she.

It was always so. Kapultep outguessed her and overpowered her, no matter how she used her great natural cunning. And yet, without him, she knew that she had no security on her throne. So, after a second, she unbent her brows, and looked across at him with as pleasant a face as she could assume.

Kapultep understood, perfectly, what was going on in her mind. Without that uncanny power of his to read others aright he had long ago given up his life, as had many of his faith; for the Norseman, who had been his master for so many years, swore by Thor and Woden, and Freya, the gracious; and would have naught to do with the old, dark mysteries of the Druids.

Kapultep, far more clever than most men of that time, knowing much more than even the deeply versed priests of his faith, had managed to win his life and a sort of tolerance of his gods, through the influence of Tlaya, who represented to her lord that her heart continued to incline toward the altars of her early piety.

As a matter of fact, Tlaya's heart inclined toward but one worship, and that was the worship of power. Daily, hourly, she burned for more power and yet more; and although she knew that the death of her lord would leave her in a most precarious position, she all but welcomed it, since it would leave her free to pursue her schemes for the increasing of her domain along the wild coast of what was, long afterward, to be known as Scotland.

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For this purpose had she protected Kapultep, for her lord was much older than herself, and she foresaw a time when, either through his death, or his old age, she would be the acting sovereign. Her need of Kapultep was great, for her lord had been a Norseman, who had brought many of his people with him, when he wedded Tlaya, of the Picts, and the two peoples were divided, not only by a different tongue, and different customs, but by different religions.

Hence Tlaya had kept alight the Druidic fire towers, far in the interior, where the priests and virgins continued to perform the ancient rites; and her influence had inclined some of the Norsemen toward that faith; and this, in turn, had drawn some of the lesser folk. So that, when Fedalm's father died, the whole country over which Tlaya now held sway was honeycombed with adherents, both Norse and Pict, to the dark, cruel and domineering Druids.

It had been impossible for Tlaya to conceal her true purposes from Kapultep; besides, he knew of one source of fear and anxiety to her which gave him a hold upon her. Therefore it was not without meaning that Kapultep had seated himself in the chair which had been Tlaya's when she took the great chair.

NEITHER was this meaning lost upon such of the men who saw it; and those who were Norsemen looked quickly down, that the flash of their steel-blue eyes might not betray their anger. Every one of them knew that the high seat was, by right, Fedalm's, that her mother should have had the lesser, and that the priest should have had none at all. But Fedalm was young, and, many thought, ignorant of her right, so that the whole question of the succession was allowed to lie for the moment.

Kapultep and Tlaya knew that the respite would be short; hence, their hasty conference while yet the funeral barge of Fedalm's father was not so far from land; but the presence of the Norsemen in the hall had prevented anything of importance from being said. The only thing that had been done was the significant seating of the queen and her priest. For they estimated that it would be best to show, at the very outset, that they intended to be rulers of the situation.

It was true that the Picts accorded far more honor to women than did the Norsemen but that they had always chosen men for their chiefs, so that Fedalm's claim would be but a temporary one, pending the time when she should marry, and her lord assume the chieftainship. But it was equally true that they all were passionately loyal to their own blood, and that they disdained all other. Moreover, the haughty Tlaya, accustomed to the deference shown women by her own people, had not endeared herself to the hot-tempered Norsemen by her demands upon their obedience to her.

Of all the people who sat in the great hall so quietly, the queen in her chair and the priest in his, and those who sat or lounged around the long table at the farther end, there was not one whose mind was not busily occupied with a feverish intensity upon all those questions, for they all knew that very soon some sort of solution of them would be attempted by somebody.

The fire in the cavernous chimney roared and sputtered, the wind sighed through the open door, the hunting dogs chained outside whined, and still they sat on, saying little, looking sidewise at each other. Then Tlaya, with the decisiveness which was always hers, stood up.

"In sorrow have we sat together thinking of him who has gone across the waters to the Land of No Return," she said, in her deep, full voice. "May the gods accord to him such honor as befits a warrior of his renown. And that there may be no lack of care for him, whither he has gone, Kapultep, the great priest, of whose powers ye know well, shall spend tonight before the altar on the Island of the Mystic Shield, there to perform such rites as his lawful knowledge shall assure him will avail my lord in that dark world of his retreat. Is it not so, Priest?"

Kapultep bowed his head humbly.

"Even as you say, Queen, shall it be," he replied, as he got to his feet and drew his saffron-colored robe, bordered with red birds' wings, around him.

His shaven poll, his unearthly pallor, his dark, malicious eyes, and the sardonic smile which usually wreathed his wide, thin mouth, all combined to create an atmosphere of mystery and power which made people shiver at the sight of him. And now, although many of the Norsemen sneered openly as the queen

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spoke of Kapultep's powers, there were others who cast propitiating glances toward him; while the more superstitious Picts drew in their breaths and gave him the salutation due one of great rank.

"I would not have you think me forgetful of my daughter, now that her father is not here," Tlaya went on, gravely, "but the girl is very young, and she is sick with the knowledge of her father's going, as you, yourselves, saw. She must be given time to recover from her sorrow, and to decide for herself to what destiny she will incline. When that time comes, I will acquaint you with it. Until it does, I bespeak for her freedom from any too solicitous urgings or from speech upon the matter. Eric the Pale, of her household, is of her father's people, and he will keep guard over her; and her foster-mother will hold her in loving care until her sorrow shall have healed."

By this means, bold and yet cunning, as was her way, did Tlaya both assert her power, and yet conciliate the men who might threaten it. For the devotion of Eric to his young mistress was well known; besides, many of the Norsemen had heard his bitterly expressed suspicion of both Tlaya and Kapultep. As the queen said, the girl was safe, in her guarded household, and they could afford to wait until such time as Fedalm, herself, could be informed of their intention to support her claim to the throne.

Tlaya, from her high place, looked down at the faces upturned to hers and read what was written on them; but they, looking up at her, saw nothing but that she seemed more swarthily handsome than ever, and that her brooding eyes held no change since last they had looked in them.

"So be it, Queen," one of them replied at last. "Peace to your slumbers this first night of your loneliness; and may the gods soften the tears of our princess."

But of Kapultep he said nothing. The priest, however, inclined his head gravely, with Tlaya's, as if he had been included in the good wishes of those who were now leaving the hall, but his dark little eyes darted a look after them venomous in its hate.

At last the queen and the priest were left alone. They looked at each other long and darkly. Each feared and hated the other, and yet they were more closely bound by ties of interest than if they had loved; for the purposes of evil are ever more intense than those of good, twisting burning strands of connection between such as unite upon them; so that they who hate together and together plot evil are more sure than any others to be dragged down, still together, to such pits of dissolution as the dark gods decree.

Tlaya's mind harbored no such reflection, for it had never concerned itself with aught save thoughts of the material world, but as she glanced stealthily at the priest, for one moment the clear, open face of her lord, and the sweet, trustful eyes of the child he had left behind, swam before her. She put her hand hastily to the great chair and sank weakly into it.

"Faint not, O Queen," said Kapultep's low, suave voice; "fear not, even being a woman. You have a man to protect you still—one more powerful than your lord, though fools know it not yet. Fear not, while Kapultep lives."

The words and the tones were altogether different. Kapultep's voice, saying kind and deferential things, exulted over what he thought her woman's weakness, and taunted her with her inability to hold her kingdom without him.

She opened her eyes, leaned back in the chair, in an attitude of insolent ease, and replied, with a malicious smile:

"Thy care and attention, Priest, are most welcome. Being the fearful, timorous creature that a woman must ever be, I shelter myself in the shadow of your great power."

Nothing could have been more insulting than her intonation, but Kapultep bent before her without an answering gleam upon his mask-like face.

"You honor me too greatly, O Tlaya," he replied. "And now, even as you have commanded, I go to spend the night upon the Island of the Mystic Shield. Come not to me there until the moon dips, for I would be alone to propitiate the dread gods in behalf of my lord."

II

KAPULTEP did go to the Island of the Shield, as he had planned, but it was many a day before either he or Queen Tlaya troubled themselves overmuch as to the matters which had so

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concerned them on the night when first they sat together in the great hall. For Fedalm drooped, like a flower suddenly removed from the sun. All day long she lay upon her couch, seldom speaking, smiling not at all, and the slow tears were often in her eyes.

The Norsemen among her mother's people looked sadly at her house, when they passed it by, and even the dark Picts murmured among themselves that the favor of the gods was turned from Queen Tlaya's people, since the beautiful and good young princess seemed likely to die.

Nothing could have suited Tlaya's plans more than to have had the cause of dissension in her kingdom removed by death, but she did not want the slightest suspicion to enter the minds of her subjects as to the cause of such a death, should it occur. Therefore Fedalm's old nurse and Eric the Pale were the constant attendants of the girl, and the queen caused every person who was a Pict to be dismissed from the household of the princess. Even the suspicious among the Norsemen praised her care and noted that she looked grave and troubled.

As for that, it was genuine enough, for Tlaya had a new source of vexation.

Four moons from the funeral day of Tlaya's lord, and while Fedalm was but little ailing, though stricken with grief, the watchers on the cliffs had sent word to the queen that a number of strange galleys had been sighted, turning into the bay, from the headlands. Tlaya could not imagine what force this could be, for she had no allies among the coast peoples, and her sovereign power over all that region had been undisputed since her union with the Norseman had strengthened her, and added to her people. Seldom, indeed, was a strange galley seen in the quiet waters of the bay, and then only one or two, courteous visitors, often on missions of barter and exchange.

The queen hastily sent word that her warriors should assemble, and that such of the country folk as could be reached were to arm themselves with what they could and come to the fortress. Then she gave herself over to the hands of her women and ordered much to be done in the kitchens.

"See that all is in order, either for entertaining guests, or for repelling foes," she said, to Kapultep, as she swept by him on her way to her bower.

The priest frowned. He did not like to receive orders. But at a pinch Tlaya was a better commander than he. He went to the walls to see that they were properly manned, as Tlaya had ordered, but he gave every one the impression that the queen had left all defenses to him.

The gray-haired warder, who watched the great gate, shook his head stubbornly, in answer to the priest's directions.

"I take not my orders from a shaven priest," he said, boldly. "Queen Tlaya I obey, as I obeyed her lord before her and if the gods will, as I shall obey the Princess Fedalm in good time. Let no man dare to ask anything of my loyalty to those I serve —but I serve no priest."

"Have a care!"

Kapultep's voice had never been softer, but those who stood silently about shuddered and they remembered old tales of the days when Druids were in power all over the land and of what they did then. But the senior warder did not flinch.

"I fear thee not, Priest," he said contemptuously. "The queen may accept thy gods—'tis naught to me that she does—but well I know that she knows a fighting man, and will not lightly dismiss such a one as I, no not for any priest in the land."

And with that he turned on his heel and would have strode off, but Kapultep pointed his long, lean finger at the broad back so unconcernedly presented to him, and after a moment the warder, staggering and trembling, sank weakly against the wall.

"Water!" he cried to his companions, "I—there is a blackness before my eyes."

Kapultep smiled evilly around upon the pale, astonished faces of the guard.

"Stand you where you are!" he snarled. "Dogs! Cattle! You think to set yourself against me," he said to the old warder, who was dazedly rubbing his forehead and trying to stand up, "against me—me, who could sink you into the sleep of death at this moment, did I so will."

The guard shrank farther away, but the warder, although he was still faint, got firmly to his feet and looked down upon the priest.

"I know not how such priestly tricks are done," he said, "but this I tell you—I fear you not, Priest. Aye—laugh; time shall see whether I do not laugh long after that thin mouth of thine is stopped with dust. And

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as for this moment, try your power on me again. I warrant 'twill prove that it has been lost in the once using."

But Kapultep did not try. He knew that his power would not avail against one as prepared for it, and as unshaken with fear as this man; and because he knew that, he lost the control of himself which was one of his most powerful weapons over others. He shrieked out that he would have the warder's fingernails torn off, that he would cause his right arm to shrivel, that he would order him to be flogged—and ever, as he ranted, the warder, and gradually the guard, laughed.

Now the galleys, favored by an inward tide and swiftly rowed, had made good time, so that while the warder and the guard and Kapultep wrangled and laughed by the gate, they were suddenly astounded to see a number of strange men approaching who held up their hands in sign of amity.

"By the gods!", exclaimed the warder, hastily snatching up his javelin and striving to assume his usual appearance of stern gravity.

As for Kapultep, he turned and scuttled away, completely confounded, not so much by what had happened, as by his own unusual loss of dignity.

THE newcomers, dark-haired and blue-eyed, were appareled in such a way as none of Queen Tlaya's men had ever seen before; and the tongue in which the young leader spoke was strange. The warder hesitated, he and his fellows barring the gate.

"Send a runner to the queen swiftly," he said without turning his steadfast gaze from the strangers. "Say that the strangers are here and I know not their speech."

Upon that the chief of the strangers spoke in the Norse tongue.

"Say to your queen, fellow, that we come in courtesy and to assure her that we intend her no harm, since we heard that her lord is but recently dead."

But at that moment the queen, herself, stepped out from the inner part of the gate, attended by many of her women and attired with much splendor. Hearing the racket at the gate and fearing some surprise she had gone silently down to investigate for herself, and when she saw what was happening she had remained, secretly taking pleasure in the priest's discomfiture and then intending to reveal herself and punish those who had treated him disrespectfully.

The arrival of the strangers and their use of the Norse and their courteous words at once brought her forth.

The chief of the strangers bowed low before her and the queen liked that, but she liked little the hardy, confident swing with which the followers of the chief came through her gate. They were far finer fighting men than hers, for all of the well-appointed apparel and air of gentle manners.

The chief walked beside the queen, bending his head deferentially to her and answering her polite inquiries as to the health of him and his men. He did not swagger, as did the Norsemen, nor fawn, as did the Pict, and the queen's wily mind was already busily at work on schemes, either to win him as an ally, or by wiles, to reduce him to vassalage to her. She did not inquire directly as to who and from where her visitors were, but the chief at once gave the information.

"We are sons of Dubha, O Queen," he said, "and we come from the land of Uladh,* where a certain chieftain—Sweynie The Red—has so ravaged our people that we, with others, seek new homes until such time as we shall be better prepared to visit dire punishment upon him."

"In truth, a fierce man he must be, and strong of followers to drive valiant chiefs such as yourselves from your own shores," the queen replied.

The insinuation was not lost upon the son of Dubha, but instead of provoking and humiliating him as Tlaya thought it would, it left not a shadow on his quiet face.

"There are two of the sons of Dubha," he replied, "and in time we will return and avenge ourselves, for we bring with us many fighting men and their women and children. And when these shall have grown strong and when the increase the gods give shall have come, then will be the time to meet the Sweynie and his evil horde. Beside, my brother is yet over-young for battle and must wait a few moons for his strength of manhood. But he is not too young to speak his own thanks for your gracious welcome, O Queen," he added with the softening of his face which was all

*Uladh, the southern part of Ireland, where civilization was far more advanced than in the north, where the tribes were still nomadic. Also, the part where all of the early legendary history is placed, and constant struggles between the petty kings were in progress.

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his smile, and he beckoned toward a tall youth who walked behind him. "My brother Angus will greet you," he said and stepped aside.

The queen looked at Angus and although she was old enough to have been his mother and although she cared little for men, save to use them to her own ends, yet she smiled upon the lad more sweetly than was her wont. For Angus MacDubha was not only fair to look upon, but he carried himself with a gracious and gallant air. Moreover, as he saluted the queen a sunny smile of such sweetness broke across his lips that the woman who would not smile in response to it must have been made of stone.

"It is a far day since I have had guests of your quality," the queen said and she inclined her dark head to Angus. "I beseech you that you and your elder brother use me and mine as your own, until such time as you may need to pass upon your way."

Angus thanked the queen, but it did not escape her quick eyes that the brothers exchanged a meaning look, and at once, with the intuition which was her strongest weapon, she understood that they had no intention of going elsewhere, but had chosen that sheltered bay as their future home. This was the thing which she had burned to know. Now, satisfied, she set herself toward the accomplishment of a purpose which would put the newcomers ill at ease and cause them to be troubled by her evident power.

She summoned a messenger and sent word to Kapultep that he should take his place awaiting her, in the hall of state. She sent for her acrobats and musicians to advance and escort her to the hall. She caused all the country folk who had hastily assembled at her previous order to line her path, while the maids in the kitchens and the stewards of the banquet were told to spare nothing for the coming feast.

Meanwhile, as they walked slowly forward, Angus and his elder brother Seumas looked respectfully about them, and the queen noting this, thought that they could not fail to be impressed. But she did not know that both the brothers came from a civilization much older than anything she had ever seen. A thousand little refinements of life were lacking in the Pictish Queen's household.

Her high lawns were bare and trampled, and her wattled huts for beasts were too near the hall of state and her folk too ragged, too matted of hair and uncouth of feature. Seumas and Angus, whose ravaged home in the far seas had been one of beauty as well as of strength, could not forbear to sigh as they saw themselves forced to take refuge on this wild and untutored coast.

But, being the courteous and gentle men that they were, they praised the site of her fortress and spoke well of the beauty of the bay which it overlooked.

"It was told to us, by some fishers whom we encountered, that thy lord is but lately taken," Seumas said to the queen.

"It is true," Tlaya answered sighing, "and I am of all women the most bereft. But my lord was mindful of me. Throughout his life he spared not to teach his men warfare, nor to strengthen his defenses. And although my heart is like a stone in my breast for lack of him, yet lives he still in these my valiant servants and people."

Seumas understood perfectly what she insinuated, but instead of answering with a boast, as she expected, he but bent his grave eyes on her, nor could she read them with all her scrutiny.

Angus had lagged behind his brother as they crossed the high lawn toward the hall of state, for his attention had been drawn toward a small stone house which showed more of that grace and refinement to which he was accustomed than any of the rough buildings near it. There was a flowering hedge set about it, and a great mass of wild flowers in a jar stood beside the open door. It was the sight of those which had at first attracted the homesick youth. And then as he paused, standing a little apart from his retainers, he suddenly saw that a young girl lay on a pile of skins beside the flowers. Within, in the obscurity of the interior, a man and an old woman sat.

The followers of Angus noting the position of the stone house and the two soldiers who stood guard on each side of it, rightly guessed that this must be the sick young princess of which the fisherfolk had spoken as so beloved when they spoke of the queen as anything but beloved; but Angus without remembering that, and with his eyes too filled with the wan beauty before him to note the soldiers, knew as much also, for the delicate hands and feet of the girl and the self-possession with which she returned his gaze were such as proclaimed a royal maid.

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She moved one of her thin hands and the man came forward from inside the house and Angus saw that he was a Norseman.

"My mother has visitors of rank, Eric," the girl said in a voice which was high and clear although so weak, "and I fear that I am not able to stand and welcome him who is without the hedge. Therefore call him to me that I may welcome him."

ANGUS did not wait for Eric to speak, but at once moved forward, bending low, his dark blue eyes fixed upon the girl. And when he was near enough to her he bent his knee beside her.

"Welcome, O stranger," said Fedalm prettily and gave him her hand.

For a moment Angus could not reply. All his heart and mind were suddenly overwhelmed with delight and awe, for he had never seen so gracious and so stately a maid. In truth, Fedalm was far more regal in her manner than she knew, for she had been accustomed since her earliest years to sit beside her father in the judgment chair, and many times he had delegated the lesser decrees to her childish mouth. But, of course, Angus could not know that and her queenly sweetness completed the swift conquest she had made of him with her beauty.

Therefore he stammered—he, Angus of the silver tongue—as he strove to make her some appropriate answer; and Fedalm, meeting his deep eyes, blushed for almost the first time in her young life and knew no more to say.

At last Angus found his voice.

"Far down your coast your people grieve for your sickness, sweet maid," he said. "They spoke to us of it, with tears. May the gods smile upon you and give you health, who are so beloved, even by humble folk."

Fedalm's eyes, far bluer than those of Angus, suddenly clouded so that they became like drowsy violets.

"Nay, young stranger, I care not for that," she said, "for he whom I love has been taken from me to the Land of No Return, whither I desire but to follow him."

Angus felt as though an icy hand had been suddenly laid upon his heart, for he thought that Fedalm spoke of a lover. The fisherfolk had not said that the princess was ill because of grief for her father—and they had said, too, that the dead king was an old man. So that it did not occur to Angus that this beautiful young creature could be stricken down to death for sorrow for a parent so far beyond her in years.

"May the gods soften your grief," he said at last and got to his feet, all the sunny day turned to blackness.

Eric, who had stood beside the princess, preserved the stolid, unseeing and unhearing appearance which etiquette demanded of him in the presence of his superiors, but a smile, the first of many days crept into his cold blue eyes as Angus turned away with bent head.

"Would it not be well to give the stranger guest a token of your favor, my Princess?" he said. "Since you are too weak to entertain him in the hall, were it not a good thing if I should take him a flower from these that you keep to brighten your eyes? He is a man to cherish such courtesy, methinks."

Fedalm did not reply at once and Eric looked anxiously after the retreating form of Angus, for he had no mind to give him the token after he had regained the company of his retainers, who had gone on toward the hall.

"Nay, then, Sweeting, send the noble youth a blossom," said the old nurse, patting the girl's hand. "'Twere no more than you would do were you to sit beside him at the banquet, 'tis no more than you have done, many's the time, for your father's guests."

"True—O most true nurse," said Fedalm quickly. "Here, Eric, take this one. 'Tis rare in these parts," and she hastily broke off a bloom, not seeing the smile which those who loved her exchanged over her head.

So it was that Angus, pacing gloomily on the heels of his retinue, felt himself plucked by the sleeve and turned to find the retainer of the princess beside him.

"The Princess Fedalm, lacking strength to rise and entertain you in the hall as was her wont when her father held state there and as she can so fittingly do, sends you this flower as token of her desire to do that which is not possible."

Angus took the flower bewildered. That a girl dying for love should send him such a gracious token seemed strange. Eric, looking carefully away from the downcast face, spoke casually as if continuing a conversation.

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"In truth, she is a most gracious princess. May the gods send her surcease of her grief for her father, that she may again delight us all with her beauty and her sweet talk."

"Her father?" Angus repeated. "Is it for her father that the sweet maid lies so near to death?"

"Even so," Eric replied and stole a glance at the noble young chieftain.

The thing which he had anticipated had happened. Angus was smiling. And the scheme which Eric's love of the princess and dread of the queen had shot into his head took definite shape.

"Even so," he repeated, "for the love between them was a thing to see. And the princess has all the more cause to grieve because——"

And there he suddenly stopped as though he feared to say too much.

"None could cause the royal maid grief with intent?" Angus questioned.

Instinctively he felt that Eric was trying to tell him something of moment concerning Fedalm, and he wanted to hear it. He was not really in love with the young princess as yet, for even the fatal dart of true love requires a little time in which to do its work, but he had not liked that dark brooding face of the queen nor the sneering, gibbering priest of whom he had caught a glimpse at the gate. The noble openness of Fedalm's face and her frank and fearless eye seemed strangely set against those two sinister countenances. Dimly, therefore, he caught at the hint in the voice of Eric.

Eric answered the question with an odd lift of his eyebrows and a twist of the stern Norse mouth.

"May the gods forbid," he replied piously, but his glance held a different meaning. "The queen intends none but the best for her daughter, naturally, but it was her father whom the princess lived for and her mother she understands not so well. And it may be—well, well, the gods alone know the future. We who love her pray hourly that our young queen may be restored—not that she is queen now, certainly, but we who are Norsemen do not forget that her father was one of us and that the young princess must come into her own soon."

"O-h-h-h—" Angus said very slowly and then they stood looking thoughtfully at each other.

All the clan of Dubha had now entered the hall, and there remained without its door only Angus' personal retainers, who awaited their lord's pleasure of them, and as they now looked backward to see what had become of him, Angus slipped the flower beneath his cloak and gave Eric a careless salutation, pointing downward toward the bay, as if they had been talking of the surrounding country. And then Angus went on toward the hall and Eric returned to Fedalm, well content.

"The young chieftain sends you his thanks and his homage," he said to her, "and it is his hope that the gods will soothe your grief. Also, he agrees with me and with your nurse that you will anger the gods who have the good king in their keeping if you continue to fret for him; 'tis impious to grieve for that which the gods do, always well. Even so thinks the young chieftain."

"He is a thoughtful youth it seems," Fedalm answered after a long pause, "I will think on his words. I would not be impious."

Again, over the beautiful head, the two who watched her smiled.

III

TLAYA'S messengers had been swift, so that she found her hall imposingly arrayed when she entered it, with the hand of Seumas within hers, as custom required a guest's should be.

Musicians were piping by the fireplace, the long tables were being loaded with food and drink and one of the clowns, fantastically attired, was performing before the great chair, while her own people, pressed close against the walls, gave a thunderous shout as she entered.

Seumas knew that the queen expected him to be overawed, but he had no intention of satisfying her. Even had the entertainment far exceeded the queen's power to give, he would have thought it bad taste to comment upon it; as it was, its barbarous extravagance jarred upon him, and the untaught, unharmonized cadences of the Pict singers hurt his ear, accustomed to the ancient, beautiful art of the bards of Ierna.*

So he walked calmly by the side of Tlaya and gravely continued his desultory conversation with her, as if nothing unusual were before his eyes and the queen, forgetting herself for a moment, frowned heavily.

*Ierna—The earliest form of "Ireland."

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Then she seated herself and motioned for him to sit beside her, and it was only then that Angus came into the hall.

"I crave your pardon, Queen," he said, as he hastened toward her. "Your fair waters and high cliffs held my eye, so that it ceased to follow a greater beauty."

"This, thy young brother, has a ready tongue, MacDubha," Tlaya said to Seumas, half-smiling as she motioned Angus to sit on the stool at her feet.

" 'Angus of the Silver Tongue', our bard calls him," Seumas replied, smiling fondly down at the youth, who shook his head gaily and made a little protesting gesture with his hands which was as strange, in that time of rough action, as a hummingbird amongst a giant pine.

It was, however, characteristic of Angus, for in many ways he was favored of the gods, so that his voice and his walk and every smallest thing he did bore the imprint, faint but sure, of a nature more refined than the age in which he lived.

Seumas knew this and was proud of it, esteeming Angus something more than a mere gallant lad. And Tlaya, quick to estimate people at what value they could be to her, wondered if it would be possible to win this compelling and lovely youth to the Druidic worship and so, through his piety, to its priesthood. Such a youth, so endowed, so magnetic, would be, indeed, a bulwark of her throne.

"Aye, and I'll lay a wager that he is a poet, as well," she said with hardly a pause for her racing thoughts. "See you not more in the glory of the evening sky than we dull ones, to whom the gods have not vouchsafed their vision?" she said to Angus.

Angus clasped his hands about his knee, threw back his head and gazed up at her.

"Aye, Queen," he replied, "though I know not that I see more than others, did they but pause from counting their goods or sharpening their weapons long enough to see what the gods spread before our eyes. For if you look, with a willing heart, there in the western sky will you see the dim image of the Isles of the Blest—purple peak piled upon peak, pools of saffron and green and mighty fortresses whose pinnacles touch the first evening star, as it rises beyond the ramparts of the other world."

Those who heard the young rhapsodist were silent for a heartbeat; none there were who had ever heard such music made of mere words before and even the hardened queen did not need to stimulate the impression which the lad had made. Yet, even so, her scheming but went the faster in her dark mind.

"You must speak with our great priest, Kapultep," she said, as she beckoned the Druid toward her.

He obeyed at once, stalking along with greater haughtiness than usual, for he was not sure how much of the scene at the gate the strangers had witnessed and he was prepared to resent the slightest appearance of disrespect in their manner toward him. But Angus looked at him with wide, serious eyes and Seumas gravely inclined his head, and in neither of the two faces could the priest see aught but polite interest.

"Are your Druids vowed to the elder gods, O Queen, as I have heard?" Angus inquired, while Seumas exchanged salutations with the priest. "Or are they Dona's, as are ours?"

"Nay," said the queen, with a superior air, "the Picts have never followed Dona. 'Tis the elder gods whom they worship."

"It pleasures me to hear so," Angus hastened to reply, "for the old faith I know not of so well and for long I have wished to learn more of it, for an ancient Druid in my father's house clung to it, and often said of it much which I would understand, he being too feeble to speak overmuch."

Then he turned, with a quick zest to Kapultep.

"Tell me, Druid, is it true that still, throughout the earth, your order keeps alight the fires, first lit when the serpent wrapped his mighty coils about the land and sea?"

"It is so," the priest replied in his deepest, most impressive tones, for he, as well as the queen, had been wondering whether the thoughtful youth might not be won to the priesthood of the elder faith and so be made into a tool for the use of the queen.

So Angus fell into deep talk and learned much that he cared to hear, but also, he looked carefully upon this priest and thought thoughts of which his clear eye told naught; while Seumas and the queen spoke much of voyages and peoples.

Eric's cousin, a stern-looking Norseman, for all his extreme youth, frowned secretly, as he watched and when he could, he slipped away to have speech with the Pale One.

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"I like not this coming of strange lords, Eric," he said as they met outside Fedalm's house. "He whom they call the Silver Tongue speaks at great length with that fox the Druid, and the other, who is stupid by his eye, is charmed by the dark beauty of that Pictish Queen of ours."

"Fear not, Arnulf," Eric replied. "I have already had speech with the Silver Tongue. Moreover—but what I think should not be spoken, even between us two, perhaps. At least, not yet."

Eric stopped. His loyalty to Fedalm told him that he should not breathe a whisper of that which he hoped for. Nevertheless, his loyalty to his blood was strong, too.

"I will speak a little of it, and do you keep it within your breast for a time," he went on. "The young chief has spoken with our princess and she has sent him a token of her friendship. And it is my thought that neither he nor that brother of his, who is less stupid than you would think perhaps, will have much to do with the Dark One."

For it was in this disdainful fashion that the Norsemen spoke of Tlaya in secret.

"Aye, so?" exclaimed Arnulf. "So sets that wind, eh?"

"Return to the hall," Eric commanded, "and keep near the Silver Tongue. Serve him if you can, and when occasion offers, whisper to him that Eric sends word the princess sleeps and seems better."

"Aye—so?" the other repeated and a shadow of a smile flicked across his face.

WHEN he returned to the hall the torches were smoking over the banquet board, the fire had been heaped higher, for the early Spring evening was chill and the mead horns were being passed.

As he had promised, he stationed himself near to Angus and was rewarded after a while, by getting a quick, straight glance from the blue eyes which could be as penetrating as Tlaya's own, for all their dreamy softness.

"You have the appearance of one with whom I have already spoken, fellow," he said.

Arnulf quickly seized a horn from a passing servitor and poured for him, and as he did so, he bent until his lips were near to the other's ear.

"Eric, to whom you spoke, sends you his greeting. I am to say that she of the token sleeps and rests more quietly than is her wont."

"For this good service, thanks," Angus replied, raising his cup as if to drink to one who had given him a light courtesy, but he looked over the rim as he drank, and Eric's cousin drew back, well satisfied.

There were many Norsemen among those who lined the walls, waiting for their turn at the tables, after their betters had eaten, and the boy began to slip along, among them, as the meal went on. To each one he gave a hint—that the silver-tongued young chief was a friend, and each one, as he seemed to answer some casual remark of the youth's, allowed his eye to rest for one moment upon the dark head which so seldom bent over the cup of mead.

The Picts and Norsemen, among the noblemen who sat at the board with the queen and her guests, drank heavily and even the queen, herself, emptied cup after cup of the heavy, dark liquid; but, though Angus and Seumas looked in astonishment upon her, her dark eyes were none the less keen, nor her wit any the less ready.

The others at the table, however, either less cautious or less strong of will, soon became boisterous, and some slept where they sat, so that those who waited for them pulled them away, with much rough pleasantry and laid them on the benches against the wall and occupied their places. And those who did not sleep ate of the flesh of animals prodigiously, tearing great pieces with their strong teeth and troubling little to use the basins of water which the servitors occasionally presented for their greasy fingers.

The musicians, following the tempo of the occasion, piped wilder and wilder, out of time and tune, and the hunting dogs, released from their chains near by, growled and snarled over the bones which the feasters threw to them beneath the board.

Angus and Seumas forbore to look at each other, but occasionally, when the queen turned away, they allowed their glances to meet. Angus was very anxious to speak to his brother before the meal ended, for he was sure that the queen would soon bring up the matter of their seeking a homesite on that coast; and he wanted to hint at his suspicions, which many little things, coupled with the sight of the beautiful young princess, had aroused.

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Besides having that sort of a quick prescience which imaginative people possess, he felt that Eric and his cousin and the Norsemen who were so conspicuous among the dark little Picts, must represent some faction which would soon breed trouble for the dark-browed, haughty queen. And as between the Picts and the Norsemen, he and his brother would naturally, take the side of the Norsemen, who were more akin to their own bold blood of Ierna than the small, treacherous and mysterious Picts.

The opportunity came, at last, for Tlaya was not satisfied with what her entertainers were doing and she called Kapultep and went among them, giving them more explicit directions. In that brief moment the two brothers spoke together, but smiling meanwhile, as if they praised the mead.

"There is a young, fair princess here, about whom there is some mystery, brother," said Angus.

Seumas smiled more than was his wont.

"Trust my gay young lad to find it out," he said with tender teasing in his voice.

But Angus gave him a warning look.

"Nay, brother, 'tis no light thought," he replied. "Methinks she is in danger of her life, perhaps, for she is strangely guarded for one who is in her own fortress and they who guard her speak strangely of this queen. And the young princess, by her appearance is wholly Norse, while the queen is surely a Pict. And I have had a hint that her people are divided and that the Norsemen do not feel much reverence for her; therefore, she has but a lukewarm fighting force. And, as she is surely proud and will try to make it appear that she is ruler over all the headlands——"

"Your thought is much to the point, as always, lad," Seumas replied and then Tlaya returned to her seat and no more could be said.

The entertainers, following their instructions,now plied their trades more keenly, and the servitors brought forward a mead of even greater strength, which the queen and the Druid pressed greatly upon the two strangers, thinking that they would be ashamed to confess that they dared to drink no more. What was their astonishment, then, when Angus laughingly waved away the horn which the priest himself had attempted to pour for him.

"Nay, nay, O Priest," he exclaimed, "else will you be obliged to use your magic arts upon a very sick youth. The mead I have already drunk is warm and comforting and of a marvelous quality, but should I take any of this that you now offer I should not be a pleasing spectacle for my beautiful and gracious hostess."

"It is to be expected that children shall have weak stomachs," the queen said, smiling scarcastically, "and therefore I will excuse you. But your brother, having reached man's estate, will drink the cup of friendship with me, I know."

If she had thought to anger Angus into drinking, she was mistaken in her man, for the lad only smiled, but just the shadow of anxiety darkened his brow as he saw Seumas take the brimming cup from the hand Tlaya. He was sure that a battle of wits, if no more, would occur when the banquet was over, and he knew that neither he nor Seumas was accustomed to drink even as heavily as they had already done.

So that he was greatly relieved when he saw Seumas gravely pour the drink upon the floor, as he spoke the words which made it a compliment to the queen instead of an insult.

"I pour a gift to the great gods," said Seumas, as the liquid slowly spilled out, "all the more worthy of their propitiation since it is from the hand of a strong queen and a fair woman, and is given in the hand of friendship."

Despite herself, Tlaya's face darkened with anger and thwarted intent. She had intended to make both of the strangers drunken, and to then drive such terms with them as she chose. But not only was this now impossible—they had so refused that they left her no reasonable cause for offense. Obviously, these were people requiring the most careful of handling.

"There are few who would dare refuse the cup poured by Tlaya the Potent," she said after a long and significant pause. "It is not for naught that I am a pupil of the great Kapultep, the chief Druid of this my land. And though you pour my cup to the gods, it was not so that I meant it to be poured."

"And what will you do to me, fair Queen?' asked Seumas, now smiling. "What dark charms will you work upon a man whose thought was but to honor you the more? Better your gracious gift a libation to the gods than a mere warmer of the body for a man."

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"Take care how you jest," exclaimed the queen, drawing her heavy eyebrows into a straight, angry line. "I tell you that my name is Tlaya the Potent. Is it not so, Priest?"

"Aye."

Kapultep's answer was brief, but he so weighed his voice that it rang and reverberated in the great hall, so that even those who were at the farthest end of it heard. Both Seumas and Angus were startled, but they had already taken the measure of the wily priest and were more or less prepared for all sorts of tricks from him.

TLAYA watched to see what effect that strange deep tone of Kapultep's would have, for it never failed to impress those who heard it; and she was greatly disappointed that the strangers no more than stared and then politely returned their attention to her again.

"If ye are to be dwellers in this land of mine," said the queen after enduring their steady regard for a while, "it must be understood that my commands are to be obeyed."

She had not intended to be thus brusk with them, but it was too clear that they were difficult men to influence, and the best way seemed to be to attack them at once, with a show of authority. Even if they did not believe in her claims, she thought it likely that they would agree to them for the sake of peace and that, in time, she might effect by wiles what she could not by force.

"That is understood," Seumas replied evenly. "So long as we are within thy right of seizure, Queen, we accept your rule. But outside of it, we are free chieftains and act as we wish."

"Ah!" The queen's exclamation was a throaty purr. "Then you plan to pass on from this region! It is my loss. I had thought to add a few gallant men to my kingdom."

Now, the MacDubhas were anything but few, and Seumas smiled as he replied:

"In truth, Tlaya, I might leave a few of our men with you were you in need of them. But since we are to be neighbors, I will promise to assist you, should your fortress be menaced by sea or land."

Tlaya closed her hand fiercely on the handle of the dagger which hung from her jeweled girdle and Kapultep leaned forward in his chair. The strangers also were grave, and their followers seated near them at the long table, looked quickly and meaningly from one to the other.

"How shall I interpret that word—neighbors?" the queen asked in a deadly level tone, which sent a ripple of attention along the lines of her own people.

Well they knew that that tone boded trouble.

"We will build our dun on the other headland, Tlaya," Seumas answered in the dead silence which had fallen upon the company. "We stopped there as we came by, looked over the country thereabouts and decided on it, since it is wild land, held by no chief."

"I—I, Tlaya—hold that land." Tlaya's small, hard fist struck heavily on the board before her, and she thrust out her bold jaw and narrowed her great eyes at the two men before her. "Is it not so, Priest?"

"It is so. And far beyond the coast, even unto the Lands of the Dark Ones, does your sway hold."

"Hear you, strangers?" Tlaya demanded. "And think you that you may sail your galleys into my bay and build your dun on my headland without acknowledging me as your overlord?"

"I fear you do not understand the meaning of 'overlord', fair Queen," Angus interposed.

The queen flashed a scornful glance upon him.

"Children do not take part in counsels of state," she sneered. "It is for your elder to speak."

"I will give the younger my place," said Seumas, quietly. "Many times has Angus spoken words of wisdom, even while he was yet but a lad—which he is not now, Queen."

"Speak, then!" she commanded, with a gesture that said she but bore with this for a moment.

"An overlord has right of seizure upon all such lands as he holds with the labor of his vassals; or such land as he and his fathers have hunted upon for over six lifetimes, or upon such land as he occupies for his stronghold, or upon such land as his cattle graze upon, but not upon any other."

"Wise words," Tlaya exclaimed. "What say you to this, Kapultep?"

"There is only one law in this land," the priest answered, "and that is the law given by the Druids, by whom chiefs and kings have held their tenure of lands for ten

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thousand times six lifetimes. I—and those of the priesthood before me—have acknowledged the claim of Queen Tlaya and of her forebears to all this region, and I, in my priestly office, now publicly confirm that acknowledgment, and refuse you the right of land seizure, save as Queen Tlaya's underling."

If eyes could have killed, Kapultep would have died at that moment. Tlaya was simply furious and blind with rage, for the priest had taken an advantage of her which, she knew, it would be almost impossible to overcome. He had placed her in the position of an inferior. He had assumed the old rights of the Druids, which had fallen more and more into disuse for many years before. Moreover, it was impossible for her to take a stand against him.

A glance at her Picts, cowering under his fierce eyes, and at her Norsemen, laughing in their beards at her, was sufficient to show her the weakness of the support on which she could count.

Seumas would have answered the priest indignantly, but Angus had touched his foot, and he had remained silent, and both of the brothers watched, with a good deal of curiosity, the gradual clouding and dimming of the queen's glowering eyes. As for Kapultep, having shot the bolt which he had had in reserve all along, he sat silent, trying to look as meek and sanctimonious as he could.

Finally the queen turned to Seumas. She had dropped the lids of her eyes until no more than a black, gleaming slit appeared between them, and she had smoothed out her face until it was no more than a beautiful mask.

"You hear the decision," she said. "As the priest speaks, so is it. He has come of a long line of priests who have dwelt in this land."

"I have heard him," Seumas answered quietly, even with good humor, but Tlaya was not deceived; she knew that he spoke with inward scorn. "But what he says," he went on, "brings no meaning to my ear. I do not recognize his rights, in any manner whatever. Your rights I do recognize. As my brother has explained, the rights of an overlord are so held, according to his words, in all lands that are not barbarous. I am sure that you would not be so considered, O Queen."

"It matters not what I would be considered," Tlaya replied, furiously. "It matters only that what I speak shall be obeyed. I say that you shall not build your fortress on the other headland."

Seumas and Angus looked at each other, gravely, and Tlaya was conscious of some interchange of thought between them. Then Seumas turned to her.

"How will you prevent it, Tlaya?" he asked mildly.

The queen sprang to her feet and many of those who sat in the hall sprang up also, but Seumas and Angus sat still, and their followers did the same.

"Hear ye, men of mine," the queen cried, "this stranger, driven over the waters, outlawed from his own land, asks how I shall prevent him from building on my lands. He dares to ask that!"

THE Picts in the hall growled in their throats, and began crowding nearer to Tlaya, but the Norsemen stood where they were, or slipped backward toward the walls and the doors. Tlaya glanced at Kapultep, who arose and held out his shriveled hand, in a gesture of warning.

"Let your answer to these strangers be clear, ye people," he said using the deepest notes of that artificially resonant tone which he reserved for his best effects.

The Picts answered him with a shout, but the Norsemen—and they were as numerous as the Picts—said not a word.

"Part of your people do not seem overanxious to follow your lead, O Queen," Angus said in the silence that fell. "Had you not best be wise? Is there real occasion for neighbors to be hot of tongue toward each other?"

Tlaya looked down at him and it required all of the self-control she possessed to prevent her from dragging out her dagger and attempting to kill him with it. It had been a good many years since she had known what it was to have a direct command of hers disregarded, for since her Norse husband had been united to her, his people had made her the most powerful ruler on all that stretch of the coast. But now that he was gone, those very people were her weakness.

But even so, baffled and in danger, Tlaya was not the woman to lose one point of vantage which she could retain by any

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twist or turn. So now, she looked thoughtfully on Angus and conquered her murderous impulse.

"If you speak me fair, I may listen," she said with the air of one who bestows a favor. "Sit ye down, my people, until I hear what the strangers would say."

"I say as my brother has said, that there is no occasion for anger," Seumas stated when the queen and Kapultep were again seated. "The other headland is outside of your seizure, the glen below it is not your hunting field, for the deer there are unafraid—they have not been driven—and the country which lies beyond, untilled, is not yours, since your cattle range on the other side. We will build our dun on that headland, and we will be good neighbors of yours, Tlaya. Should you need help against invaders, we will come, if you call upon us. And to you we will look for such courteous interchange of visits as will strengthen our friendship. What say you?"

Tlaya put her strong chin in her hand, leaned her elbow on her knee and looked intently at the two brothers. She really wanted to think about this proposal, but she also wanted to give Kapultep some anxious moments, for Seumas had spoken most pointedly to her, and her alone, ignoring the priest.

And her mind leaped swiftly through and around all the possible complications which such an alliance as this might bring about. She saw that it would be an advantage to her in dealing with Kapultep to have such an ally, but she doubted the ultimate good to herself of it, for the strangers spoke the Norse tongue, and while they were dark where the Norsemen were fair, they had the same build of body, the same steel-blue, flashing eyes and the same way of appearing most mild when they were most dangerous. As for Angus, he did not look at the queen as she leaned forward in her great chair with her wonderful eyes fixed upon first him and then his brother. He had made up his mind about this beautiful woman and this gaunt, evil old man, and all he wanted was to get away from them, so that he could tell his brother of his fears for the good and beautiful young princess who lay near to death for grief of her father's death—and who, he more than suspected, was in much danger, if not in actual peril of her life.

It irritated Tlaya almost beyond bearing, that neither of the MacDubhas looked anxious or even interested in the momentous decision which they ought to think her about to pronounce, and she saw clearer, and clearer that it would be of no use for her to attempt to overcome them by a show of friendliness, and suddenly her anger blazed up again, fiercer than ever.

"Neighbors!" she sneered. "Neighbors—indeed! Fine neighbors—coming here and taking up land which does not belong to you. I should do well to trust to such friendship—aye, I should, indeed! Say you not so, Kapultep?"

"The curse of the dark gods shall descend upon them, Tlaya," Kapultep replied, wagging his shaven poll. "They and theirs shall be cut off in their flower, their cattle shall sicken, and their young girls shall they lay in the ground before they have borne."

The Picts shuddered and some of the Norsemen frowned. There were tales whispered behind hands of how this dreadful curse had sometimes fallen upon those who displeased Kapultep. But the MacDubhas smiled a little and their men merely looked curiously at the priest as he intoned the dire words.

"I have said that we do not own your rights in this, Priest," said Seumas shortly, "and therefore your curses mean nothing to us—in faith, 'tis little I think of curses, myself. Deeds and not words from any priest or magician are worth the considering of brave men."

"Those who laugh near a Druid live not long," said Tlaya in a menacing voice.

She was quoting a saying of the countryside, but the MacDubhas did not know that, and if they had, they would have done just what they did, which was to laugh aloud.

"Nay, then, there was never a man I feared to laugh before, even when I was but a babe," said Angus gaily.

"Laughter is the sweetener of life, Tlaya," Seumas added. "Come now, take a jest in good part. Shall we be neighbors and good friends, or shall we dwell apart, you in your fortress and we in our dun, scowling at each other across the bay."

"We shall do neither," the queen said. "You will put your men on your galleys and go on to some other part of the world and I shall forget that such troublesome visitors ever came to my shores."

Then Seumas and Angus suddenly stood

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up, and all their men with them, and the look which Tlaya so dreaded in her own Norsemen came over their faces—that odd appearance, as if a veil had dropped over their features. The Picts, hot-headed, fierce and with some queer Southern strain running through their blood, were always frightened by this power, possessed by men of the North, to completely conceal what was passing in their minds at a crucial moment.

"I grieve that we must part so, Tlaya," Seumas said, but now his voice was no longer gentle.

It was hard and stern and the ring of the chieftain in it. And then he saluted her, formally and turned to go.

"Ho, my people," Tlaya sprang to her feet, "escort the MacDubhas to their galleys. I cry you farewell, O strangers."

"It is not necessary—neither the escort nor the farewell, Tlaya," Seumas replied as he moved toward the door with his retainers, "for we shall camp on the beach tonight and tomorrow we begin the building of our dun."

IV

BY MIDSUMMER the dun of the MacDubhas was nearing completion on the farther headland, and Tlaya's chariot road beneath it was little used by the queen.

Not without a struggle had the Pictish ruler submitted to this invasion of what she considered her territory, but her kingdom was hopelessly divided against her, at least for the time. The Norsemen among her people had plainly shown that they would enter into a fight with the strong lords from over the sea with but lukewarm ardor, and as for pitting her own small and excitable folk against the giants of the North, that was not to be considered for a moment. So Tlaya, gnashing her teeth in rage, had to sit by and see a strong, well-fortified dun arise which threatened all her comings and goings.

To add to her disquietude, Fedalm began slowly creeping back to health, so that the Norsemen praised the gods aloud and followed her about with a devotion and willing submission which stirred fury and despair in the queen's heart. Moreover, Fedalm herself seemed changed toward her mother since her illness. Even less often than before did she appear before the queen; and when the two did meet the girl's eyes seemed less timid, less childlike than they had been.

"Your gods do little for their worshipers, it seems, Priest," the queen said one night as she and Kapultep sat alone in the hall.

It was the hour of sunset and they were alone—an ominous sign; in the times when the chief who was Fedalm's father was alive the place would have been crowded with those who sought his favor and by friends who wished his company. Even the Picts, loyal as they were to their queen, paid her less court when they saw the bold and independent Norsemen so neglect her.

"It is not greatly to my advantage that I have favored you and your gods, is it?" the queen went on, sarcastically.

Kapultep shook his head with a kind of ghastly playfulness at her.

"It would have been more to your advantage had you fully thrown in your lot with them, instead of thinking that you might combine against them with the MacDubhas," he said, gently. "Also, it would help to unite your kingdom were you to show, in some decided way, that you are a follower of the Druidic faith. The only thing which can unite these very different peoples of yours is a common religion. You make a mistake, Tlaya, to treat me as indifferently as you do. It is nothing to me, of course, but I grieve to see you running against your own course of fortune."

The priest's tones had never been more suave, and by that token Tlaya was sure that he had been hatching some new deviltry.

She leaned forward and clipped the priest's scrawny arm with her beautiful hand, whose fingers could pinch like steel.

"What division in my kingdom have you been making, Kapultep?" she asked quietly.

Kapultep knew her voice as well as she did his, and he heard the note in it now which told him that it would be dangerous to act carelessly at that moment. Either he must conciliate Tlaya or boldly face her. He took the latter course.

"It is not I who divide your peoples, Queen," he said, firmly, "it is you who are so anxious for your own advantage that you will never be true to any one line of

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conduct. When have you shown your real faith in your gods? When have you dealt with these proud, stubborn Norsemen as they should be dealt with? Have you increased the fear and awe in which a priest of the dark gods should be held by your treatment of me?

"Even the least of your followers know that on occasion you speak to me as you do not dare to speak to your Norsemen. Let there be an end of this. Give to the gods their just due, and I, their priest, will give you a united kingdom."

Tlaya leaned back in her chair and tapped one hand significantly upon her knee.

"What scheme have you in that bare poll of yours now, Kapultep?" she drawled. "Come—let me hear it."

Despite his efforts, a flush of anger crept up to the Druid's sallow cheeks. It was always that way. Just when he thought he had impressed the wily queen, she suddenly saw through all his subterfuges.

"You know well that it is useless to try your tricks with me, Priest," Tlaya said, smiling maliciously as she read the discomfiture of the other.

Kapultep, with an effort, subdued himself, and bent upon her a keen, steady gaze.

"If I tell you how to settle the one matter which divides your kingdom, will you, on your part, agree to serve the gods with more faith?" he demanded.

The queen's eyes narrowed.

"You mean——"

Kapultep nodded. The queen looked earnestly at him, and suddenly put out her hand, which the priest took in his shrunken but powerful paw. Together, they exchanged glance for glance, distrustful, quizzical, wary, eager, lustful for power, scornful of all good—a veritable glare of demons. Then the queen drew back.

"Now tell me," she said.

"Would it not be well," Kapultep purred, "if one of the royal line—the one who holds in her small hand the destiny of the kingdom—were to become the chief priestess of the great fire tower? Would not her commands, sent out occasionally from her seclusion among the sacred virgins of the holy fire, be all powerful in your kingdom? And could not those commands be such as to fall to your advantage—commands which must come through the chief priest, since the priestess is forbidden the sight of common mortals after her initiation? What say you to this, Tlaya?"

The smile of triumph which Kapultep had expected to see upon the queen's lips did not appear. Sunk back in her chair, her dark, brooding eyes fixed upon some spot above his head, she seemed suddenly remote—a shadow of that royal power which the priest had taught himself to despise lay on her, and a chill crept over him as he wondered whether the queen had suddenly made up her mind to fight without him.

He knew well enough that her cause would be strengthened if she did. Was she seeing that? Most certainly the expression of her face had changed swiftly; he could not read it.

Every silent moment that passed increased the priest's uneasiness, and well it might, for Tlaya, for one of the few times in her wicked career was seeing herself as she really was. The thing which had brought it home to her was this suggestion of Kapultep's. It was not that she hesitated to immure the young, beautiful girl in eternal seclusion on the high, lonely fire tower far in the interior where the fire from which all the altar fires were lighted was kept ceaselessly aglow—it was the sharp realization, brought by the priest's gloating, slavering eyes, that Fedalm's beauty was coveted by the man, even as her influence was wanted by the priest.

That mummylike body, that fetid breath, those pale, corpse lips, the little, black eyes sunk far in the skull—that for Fedalm's glorious tresses, for Fedalm's pearly body, for Fedalm's flower face—aye, and that black soul to spew its venom upon her pure whiteness! Tlaya shivered and covered her face with her hands. If Kapultep had suggested slowly poisoning the girl, as Tlaya had half thought he would, she would have eagerly agreed, but she was still a woman, for all her wickedness.

No arms but her lord's had ever lain about her, and there remained in the depths of her a spark of womanliness which blazed up at the thought of this desecration of sweet young virginhood.

With all his cunning, Kapultep was far from guessing the real cause of the queen's strange behavior. The idea that he would be personally repulsive to the young princess

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did not present itself to him. He knew, of course, that she would fight against his possession of her. That was natural, but he was sure that when she realized that the greatest priest in all the land was willing to be her slave in love she would be proud of her conquest.

The one weak spot which every human possesses may vary; but even in the proudest, the best, the worst, the highest and the lowest, there is invariably one point at which all their goodness or wisdom or cunning will desert them. That one spot in the Druid was his lust.

Once his evil had laid hold upon him he lost his power to see with that clearness which made him master in all other matters. He had cast longing eyes on Fedalm since she first began to blossom, but so long as the good king, her father, lived, he might as well have looked at the moon. The moment that he was dead, however, the priest had begun to plot and plan for the very thing which he now proposed.

BUT moment after moment went by, and Tlaya did not stir. Kapultep dared not speak again, for he was afraid of saying something which would but increase the queen's emotion, whatever it was. So he sat perfectly still, and the shadows gathered in the corners of the great hall, and wrapped themselves around the beautiful figure of the woman who lay back in her great chair and fought with her good angel.

Suppose she should give up the fight, acclaim Fedalm—the Norsemen, in gratitude, would gather loyally around the throne, and the Picts, already loving Fedalm, would transfer their allegiance. As for the girl, Tlaya did not question that she would be a wise ruler, for even as a child some of her decisions, given by the side of her father, had shown the royal firmness and justice which should belong to all that kings do. For herself, for Tlaya, there would be peaceful days, well served, not abated in signs of rank—Tlaya was sure of Fedalm as to that.

All would be well, but when Fedalm married—and there was no doubt that she would attract some powerful lord with her beauty and her talents and her kingdom—then where would Tlaya be? A mere grandame, shoved into the poorest house in the fortress without honor or power. . . .

The queen suddenly sat up in her chair, her black eyes blazing, and Kapultep drew a long breath of relief. Here, again, was the woman whom he knew.

"Your plan is good, O Priest," Tlaya said, firmly, "but methinks it will be difficult of accomplishment. How shall we persuade to the office of priestess one who has persistently refused to worship aught but her father's gods? One who turns her face away when I light the fire upon our altar?"

"You forget that I have been the tutor of the princess," Kapultep answered, "and her respect for me is great. And now that I have your approval of the plan I shall use all my influence to incline her toward the thought."

The queen pinched her lower lip and shot the priest such a skeptical, shrewd glance that he understood her doubt of his powers as well as if she had spoken.

"Should even that fail," he went on, quickly, "I shall use my powers, which are not of this world."

Now, Tlaya did not have very much faith in those powers, but she did not wholly disbelieve in them. Kapultep's queer ability to bring on a faintness, which he had done to the warder of the gate, and which was not the first time he had demonstrated his uncanny control of people, and one or two other matters in which he seemed able to harness the forces of Nature to his purposes, were powerful factors in his sway over the queen. She knew that many of the things he did which impressed and frightened people were mere tricks, but the fact remained that there were other, rarer things which shook even her iron nerve.

She looked thoughtfully at him across the gloom which now lay on the hall. The priest had covered his face with one of his bony hands, but as she looked he suddenly removed it, and she shrank back with a low cry. All across that livid countenance, lighting up the hollows of the eyes, and the dark flare of the cruel nose, there were streaks of blue, cold fire!

The queen shut out the awful sight with hands that shook, and it was a long time before she moved. When she did Kapultep's tones, mild and gentle, spoke in her ear.

"Look up, O Queen. The sign which the gods placed upon me, that your doubt might be cured, has passed."

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She looked up, almost fearfully, then, and saw only that the priest stood beside her, a mere blur in the dark.

"Give me your hand, Tlaya," he said, kindly, "and I will lead you to your bower."

"Wait!" The queen's voice was again firm. "It is true that the gods must be with you, Kapultep. Therefore will I, from henceforth, put my trust in you. What is your real plan?"

The priest leaned close and whispered. Now that the hall was dark he had no intention of chancing some listener.

"This is the plan," he said. "First, I will try what I can do with Fedalm, but I will not speak to her directly of the vocation for which she is destined. Meantime, in my chamber on the Island of the Mystic Shield, I will prepare a talisman—a brooch of great splendor, which, when put upon your daughter's bosom, will incline her to do all that you require. But its operation will not be complete at once.

"Therefore we will plan to have her taken to the tower secretly, with a picked escort, which I shall accompany. But to her we will say that it is the will of her people as well as of you, her mother, and that it was so that her father planned for her—for which reason did he allow her to be taught many things which are closed to women, even to queens. Will it not work well, Tlaya?"

"Aye," Tlaya answered, but even as she smiled in the dark to think how easy it would be she frowned.

It was ever thus with Kapultep: never did he offer her anything she wanted without adding a sting to his words. What he had just said as to Fedalm's education was one of the many things which had made her hate the girl—for the young princess was learned as a priest, could sing and embroider and knew words of wisdom, such as Tlaya did not even understand, when spoken. The fame of the royal child's learning and talents, beyond all of her sex, had spread even to other kingdoms, eclipsing the glory of the beautiful, proud and haughty Queen of the Picts, which had once resounded through all that region.

"Aye, it is well," she repeated, after a long pause, and got heavily to her feet. "Call my women, Kapultep. I would rest."

It was quite dark in the hall, save for the moonlight which came through the great door. Some of the hunting dogs, sniffing about on the floor, for bones and bits of food, ran hastily out as the priest came down among them. One of them in the dim light seemed larger than the others, and for one instant the priest's eyes blazed as he peered at it leaping through the door. But against the light sky he saw its head and long nose, and concluded that the shadows had deceived him into thinking it larger than it was.

But if he had dashed after it he would have seen it speed around the corner of the hall, stand up, snatch off the dog's head and quietly saunter away toward the house of the young princess.

V

ERIC THE PALE was standing at the door of Fedalm's house when Arnulf stopped before him.

"How fares our princess, Eric?" he asked.

"Nurse Rula even now sets her evening meal before her for which she has asked already three times," Eric replied.

He did not smile, but the tone of his voice told that he jested happily.

"That is well," the young man said. "Think you it would be presumptious for me to pay my homage to her as she sits at meat?"

For answer Eric opened the door and led his cousin into the small hall which was Fedalm's living-room. There were many evidences about of the young princess's refinement. Tapestries of her own making hung from the stone walls, rushes strewed the earthen floor and great branches of Summer blooms were fastened over the fireplace. The table at which she sat was rude and heavy, as was all the furniture of those unskilled days, but a white napkin of Nurse Rula's weaving lay beneath her plate. She smiled as she saw the two tall, serious Norsemen.

"Welcome, my kinsmen," she said graciously. "Will you sit and partake of Rula's good cakes?"

They thanked her and sat, and the old nurse with privileged familiarity took her place at the end of the board. Many a night the four held company in this fashion, for Fedalm well understood the kingly art of graciousness, while retaining her own proper place, and this was one of the things

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which the Norsemen loved her for, even as they despised Tlaya because she must ever be haughty or fawningly familiar.

But Arnulf did not begin to speak as usual, of some light matter of the day's hunt, or of the affairs of his friends, and his grave demeanor soon made its impression upon those who sat with him.

"Have you a sickness, my cousin?" Eric asked, after the lad had no more than touched the good food which was set before him. "'Tis not like you to slight Nurse Rula's handiwork."

"Indeed, I have a sickness, Eric," the other replied, and then he glanced at the old nurse. "Where are the attendants?"

"They have gone to walk on the beach," the old woman said, "for my child likes to be alone at this hour and free from eyes before which she must maintain a greater state than she need for those who love her as we do."

For answer the lad brought from beneath his cloak the dog's head which he had snatched off outside the hall of state. At the first glance the others thought that it was some beast which he had slain in hunting and then, as he slipped it over his head, they stared at him in astonishment.

"With this, on all fours, have I been in the great hall many evenings," he said, running with the dogs, crouching beneath the banquet board and sometimes lying with but the snout thrust out, behind the great chair, itself."

Now they stared at him, indeed, but Eric's eyes lighted with a fierce fire.

"You did well, my cousin," he said, "but how was it that you told me naught of this good thought?"

And then Fedalm spoke—

"It was not a good thought. How dared you thus to spy upon the queen! In truth, I will have you thrown from the walls for a traitor."

She stood up to her full length, flinging back the glory of her hair from her young brow, very stern and cold and just, and the three at the table looked at her, open-mouthed, for she was as the wraith of her father, in the days when he was young. And their eyes lighted with pride.

"Nay then, Princess," Eric said after a long breath, "think no such thing of this thy servant. Be sure that it is only in your service that he would so presume. Is it not so?"

The boy nodded, but kept his eyes upon the young princess.

"Grant me that I may speak," he said formally to her.

Fedalm slowly seated herself and it was the king's wise, deep eyes that she bent upon him, and it was the king's gesture with which she held out her white hand.

"There are many things, O Princess, which Eric or Rula must now tell you and upon which it were better that I should keep silence, but upon this matter I will tell it to you, even as many of your people know it. Queen Tlaya holds strange speech with Kapultep, the Druid, at times; I who am your true man as I was the true man of your father—may the gods smile upon him—had the fortune to overhear those words and I told them to Eric who commanded that I should hear all I could, since they touched upon the happiness—and peace—and rightful place—which are your rights."

Fedalm stayed him there for a moment and then she turned a perplexed face to Rula, some of her state gone from her, and the trusting child coming in its place.

"What is this?" she asked the old woman. "Do you say, O my almost mother, that I should give ear?"

"Aye, indeed, my Sweeting," the old woman answered. "'Tis a matter which I have long known must come to your knowledge. Nay, more, it is a matter which demands that you should consider it as if you were already seated upon the throne which can not be kept from you much longer."

Fedalm's eyes opened wide, for Rula's quavering voice told of her agitation. And what meant she about not being kept in ignorance? The girl turned back to Arnulf.

"So?" she said.

"So I fashioned me this disguise. 'Tis a wild dog that I killed last year near the cattle, whose skin and head I dried, thinking that I might use it one day, even as I have, for even then the king, your father, was ill and I knew that if he died my princess would need some one who could follow a hidden trail."

"But—but—but my mother," Fedalm stammered. "In truth, I like it not that I should sit and hear words which show her distrust."

The three glanced quickly at each other.

"Tell her, nurse," said Eric. "The time has come."

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Their looks were so solemn and old Rula trembled so that Fedalm's royalty fell from her and she ran around the table to fall into the old arms spread for her.

"Nay, nay, what is this new sorrow?" she cried out. "Rula, Rula, is't not enough that my father is taken? Let me not hear a new terror."

For answer the old woman slowly bent her stiff knees and kissed the hem of Fedalm's robes.

"It is to the daughter of my king that I would speak," she said, "and not to my child. Your father, if he were here, would command you to assume your rank."

Well she knew how to touch the girl's pride and love. Fedalm's face lighted, she went back to her chair and sat down facing them.

"As my father would that I should do, I will do," she said. "Let me now hear all that I must be told."

"Finish your tale," Eric said to the lad who immediately took up his story to which Fedalm listened with horror and astonishment.

"To the fire tower!" she exclaimed. "It can not be that my mother——"

"Has the king's daughter ever heard me or Eric or the youth speak of your mother, Princess? Have we not always said, 'the queen'? Think."

THE girl's face was white, so that Rula watched her anxiously, but she held her head high and when she spoke her voice was steady.

"Something there is here which I understand not. Speak plainly."

"This, then," said Eric. "Queen Tlaya is not thy mother."

"My father ever told me she was."

The old nurse shook her head.

"Did he ever say thy 'mother'. Think again. Said he not, 'the queen'?"

Her brain awhirl, Fedalm thought and felt her world sinking beneath her feet. No, not once could she remember her father using that word, mother.

"What—what—oh what means this?" she cried piteously.

Rula came close to her then and put her arms around the girl's shoulders, and Fedalm turned her face wearily into that embrace while she looked up imploringly.

"As Eric has said, now is the time that you must be told," the old woman said steadily. "Have courage, O child of the queen whom I loved as I do not love life itself.

"Your father—may the gods bless him—loved a young princess of that far Northern land where he was born and she loved him. I was her nurse, her foster-mother, as I am yours, child of my heart, and I was glad with her when she wedded the gallant young chief. I was glad with her while you lay beneath her bosom and I was with her when her young life was taken by the gods in exchange for yours. You have often teased old Rula about the love token which she wore about her neck; look, Sweeting—it is a tress of your mother's hair which I took from her head after she had passed."

Fedalm took the long, bright, shining thing into her hands. It might have been one of her own fair locks.

"My mother—oh, my sweet mother!" she cried and the tears fell from her eyes upon the token.

"Aye, Sweeting, a lovelier ne'er breathed the air, no, not even your beautiful self. But when she passed, you lay still and cold and your father thought both woman and babe were lost to him and without a word he fled to his galleys and put to sea.

"His men told much afterward of that wild voyage, but I have forgot that part, and in time he came to these coasts where the beautiful Pictish Queen held sway, her father being but newly passed to the gods. When you are older, Sweeting, you will know how a woman may heal the grief of a man. So she healed your father and he wedded her. But he would not return to his own shores. There lay too many memories. But Olof, the father of Eric, took a small galley and returned for some of the chief's jewels and there he found that there was a live babe, Sweeting—for I took you, when you would have been left beside your cold mother and warmed you in these arms and you lived.

"So we came back on the boat with Olof. Now the gods had not blessed Tlaya with a child in that first year of her love and when we came into the bay out there, late at night, the queen had been for many days at the great fire tower praying for one, she and that Kapultep, as evil then as he is now, but not so ugly. So when we came to the king there was none to see that we carried a babe.

"Never, never shall these eyes forget your

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father's face as he looked upon you. And then he took Olof and you and me with the father of the lad here and we journeyed inland to the tower to tell the queen. For your father thought that this child of his would comfort her for her sorrow.

"*Ai—Ai*—little he knew that woman. As soon as I gazed on her dark face I knew that she prayed for a child only that it might serve her ambition. But he showed you to her, told her the tale and laid you tenderly in her arms. She made as if she were overjoyed, and then she craved a boon of him, even with tears. It was that she might say the child was her own. You were overly small for your age, having been weak and puny all your early months, and you might well pass for half of what you were.

"Let it be said, the queen implored, that the child had been born several months before, but that it was near to death and had been left in the custody of the virgins, as coming more directly under the care of the gods. Let it be said that it had been kept secret so that if it died the grief might not come upon the people. But now that it was well and would live, the queen would soon return, bringing the young princess.

"Your father, Fedalm, was against it, for he was not a man of many tongues, but the queen prevailed at last, by telling him that if the child were thought to be hers it would insure its succession which, otherwise, the Picts might question. So he agreed. And the king swore us to secrecy, but there were some among the Norse who remembered me and they doubted the story. And now that you have grown to the full image of your mother, the Norsemen are sure of what has been but whispered before.

"All would be well were Tlaya not an evil woman and the kingdom fast ridden to destruction by this old Druid—may the bright gods keep his evil from us—and we have long suspected that were your father not here to protect you there would be naught which the queen would stick at to rid her path of you.

"Moreover, you are of an age to wed. And your beauty is as a king's child's should be. See you not, Fedalm, why this wicked woman plans to send you to that nest of demons—and not only to that, but to the arms of the old and shriveled priest?"

Fedalm sprang up wildly throwing out her arms.

"Rula—Rula—may the gods protect me!"

Both Eric and the youth sprang to her side.

"Fear not, Princess," they said in their deep, harsh voices, "rather than see you fall into such hands every Norseman will die by torture, and if naught prevail, one of us will send you to the gods with a clean blade before ever that unclean, crawling thing shall defile you. And if we seat you not in glory and honor on the throne of your father, may we be sent to the caverns of the dark gods. For our blood is your blood—your father was our king—and we are your men—O Queen."

The room was very still as Eric ended. And then he and the youth and the old woman bent before her as they had before her father and Fedalm looked down upon them from her slim young height until the terror in her eyes died out.

It was all taking its place in her mind, now. Many, many things which she had not understood came to her. She thought of how her father had brought her, so young, to his judgment seat and of how he had trained her in wisdom, as women were not used to be trained and she knew that he must have had some foreshadowings of this hour.

She stooped and laid her hand in the ceremonial manner on the hands of her subjects.

"Rise, good servants," she said as she had heard her father say, "rise, bearing in your hearts love for me and assurance that my good right arm is ever raised in defense of you."

The old, stately words came pipingly in her girlish voice and the little hand she laid upon them was very different from the great mailed fist of her father, but the three to whom she spoke thrilled to their hearts' core, for they knew that they had found their sovereign.

TO BE CONTINUED

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BINGO

by Hapsburg Liebe

Author of "A Man's Woman," "Little Pal," etc.

"LICK CREEK JIM" LANE, finest and fairest timberjack fighter of the Pigeon River logging country, had been unjustly outlawed, and he had become very bitter about it. At the first, being a bold and dashing disciple of Robin Hood, with neither blood nor any great robbery on his hands—this contrary to the law's view of the matter, however—had had its wild and bright, romantic side for him. He had enjoyed it much at the first, but now he was tired of it; he was tired of dodging from pillar to post, and tired of living from hand to mouth. In the last analysis, Lane was a healthy and normal man, and sleeping in his boots on the ground in the blessed dark no longer carried delights with it.

So Lick Creek Jim hied himself with his Winchester to the logging section that lay around Upper Bad Ax Creek, seeking for both work and peace of mind where he was little known. Besides, the only girl he had ever even thought of as his sweetheart, whom he hadn't seen for two years, lived in this section of the country.

The Upper Bad Ax camp's arrangement was much like that of any other Southern mountains logging-camp. It snuggled in the bottom of a broad and thickly wooded valley; there was a big and rough boarding-house, a commissary in the same type of building, and a shed where logging locomotives and cars and skidders were repaired. Through one side of the clearing ran the winding, sparkling creek, and beside it the little logging railroad lay like the erratic course of some drunken monster serpent.

Late in a still Midsummer afternoon, it was. Lane could hear distinctly the welcoming staccato of a geared locomotive's exhaust, and the welcoming shrill scream of a steam skidder's signal whistle, coming from the deep woods above the camp. These sounds revived his spirits. He was an expert logger, and he loved the work.

Lick Creek Jim approached the camp from below. He went cautiously, his air that of the hunted man he was. No woods noise escaped his well-trained ears; no woods movement passed his quick eyes unnoticed. When he had reached a point within half a mile of the camp, the tall figure of a man stepped as though from nowhere to the ties squarely before him, and he halted with his rifle at a ready. Lick Creek Jim, as always, was prepared to give battle for his liberty.

"Well," he clipped, "who're you?"

The tall man grinned for just a second. He was middle-aged, slender, almost gaunt, and as ragged as a beggar; his beard was thin and straggling, and his eyes were somehow haunting in their penetrativeness. Again he opened the thin slit that was his mouth, and this time he uttered one single puzzling word—

"Bingo!"

"You're crazy," growled Lane, and into his mind there flashed remembrance of an idiot he had known on Pigeon River. "What's your name, friend; eh?"

"Bingo!"

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"Can't you talk?" snapped Lick Creek Jim. "Why don't you say somethin' sensible? I'm no mind-reader, friend, I asked you what was your name. Mine's Lick Creek——"

Lane broke off short in his introduction of himself. It would be better, perhaps, not to give his name here on Bad Ax. Idiot or not, the lanky man's eyes twinkled at Lane's slight perturbation.

"I wonder if you've got enough hoss sense," said Lick Creek Jim, "to tell me where a little lady named Mary Sue Selford lives?"

"Bingo," nodded the queer one; and with that he beckoned to Lane and led off through the green laurels.

Lane followed upon the heels of the unknown man for the greater part of a quarter of a mile through the dense undergrowth, and at the end of the short journey his guide halted him behind a giant poplar that stood near a vine-covered and homelike old cabin.

"Bingo," he said softly, leaning out and slyly pointing ahead.

The outlaw peered toward the cabin. On a bench beside the front door sat a girl who couldn't have been much more than twenty, who was barefooted and clad in a simple dress of blue calico, whose leaf-brown hair hung down her back in a single plait. Lane could not see her well, for her head was bent low. A convulsive shaking of her fine, slim shoulders told him that she was grieving deeply.

Somehow it was hard for Jim Lane to believe that this was the Mary Sue whose ever-laughing face had haunted his dreams at night—along with the frowning, threatening faces of divers sheriffs—for two years. He turned to whisper a question to his guide, and found himself alone there behind the poplar; the other man had disappeared as quickly and as completely as though he had been not flesh and blood, but spirit!

Lane gave that matter little thought, however; the sobbing girl had all his attention. He strode toward the cabin, stepped across the low-paling fence that ran around the narrow yard, and in another moment had drawn up before her.

He knew her now, and her sorrow, whatever its cause, struck him like a knife.

"Mary!" he muttered, removing his broad-rimmed hat and dropping the butt of his rifle to the ground between his booted feet. "What's the trouble, Mary Sue?"

The girl looked up at the sound of his voice, made as if to run from him, and thought better of it. She seemed dazed by his sudden appearance.

"Don't you recollect me, Mary Sue?" Lick Creek Jim went on awkwardly, more than a little disappointed. "I danced with you every dance that night—when you was visitin' over on Pigeon—don't you recollect?"

She smiled at him, and the smile transformed her tear-stained countenance. She was very pretty now.

"You look tired, Jim," she told him. "Set down here and rest. O' course, I recollect you, Jim. But—however did it come that you happened along here?"

A mountain mission school had taken away the greater part of her broad and flat, native dialect, just as association with Yankees in logging outfits had taken away the major part of that of Jim Lane. Lick Creek Jim sat down on the bench beside her.

"A big reason for my happenin' over here," he said hopefully, "was my wantin' to see you oncet more, Mary Sue. I ain't never been able to forgit you, Mary, sence I danced every dance with you that night."

The blush that pinkened her cheeks did not indicate that she was displeased. He continued:

"I met a quare gazzyboo on the railroad, who showed me the way here. He was the quarest sort o' gazzyboo! When I'd ask him his name, or anything else, he'd say, 'Bingo!' I told him he was crazy, and I still think it. Do you know him, Mary?"

"I KNOW him about as well, I reckon, as anybody else around here knows him," the girl answered. "Everybody says he's crazy, but I don't know whether to believe he is, or not. His eyes don't look like a crazy person's; did you notice that, Jim? But, anyhow, he's as quare as a blue moon. The only word he's ever said around here is jest that one, 'Bingo.' Anything you say to him, he'll come back at you with that, 'Bingo.' I've heard him in the woods at midnight, hollerin' so pitiful, 'Bingo-o-o!'

"A man got killed at the camp a week ago, and he walked up and looked and shook his head. The superintendent says to him, he says: 'Well, Bingo'—everybody calls him that, Jim, and I've never heard another

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name for him—'well, Bingo,' says the super, 'what do you think o' that?' 'Bingo!' says he. 'Bingo-o!'

"It was funny, Jim, and it was sad too. Sometimes he gives me the shivers up my back. He's like a ghost, Jim. He'll be standin' beside o' you before you can snap your fingers, and he'll be gone in the same way. Sometimes nobody sees him for days, and nobody ever seen him eat anything, nor nobody ever seen him sleep. I don't know what to make of it all, it's that ungodly and strange. Granny Peg—I live here all alone with my grandmother, Jim—Granny Peg, she says the man's bewitched; but I don't believe that, o' course—do you?"

"I don't," Lane declared. "Say, Mary Sue, I—I got to know; what was it you was cryin' about?"

A cloud immediately obscured the sunlight of Mary Sue's face. Never before had Lick Creek Jim seen a human countenance change so much in so short a time. Her voice broke a little when she spoke.

"Granny Peg was raised here in this old cabin, Jim," she said. "My mother was borned here and died here, and I was borned here too. It ain't much, but we love it. It makes me think of a song they used to sing at the mission—'Be it ever so humble, there's n-n-no p-p-place like home.' The Bad Ax superintendent, he says it's on the comp'ny's land, and he says we—we've got to go.

"They're goin' to cut the timber all down—all o' them big and fine old trees, Jim. I read in a b-b-book at the mission where it said trees was the fust temples o' God. It seems like men has been hackin' down God's temples ever sence time begun—not meanin' trees altogether.

"Them trees, Jim, I know 'em every one. I've got 'em named. Over there's Elijah, and over there's Saul, and that biggest poplar is Aaron. That big oak there is David, and the twisted elm beside of it is poor Absalom. The biggest oak, the biggest tree of 'em all, is Samson; that purty hemlock beside of it is Delilah. The slim young white oak standin' clost to Aaron, it—it's——"

She colored, gave the man beside her a half-frightened glance, and bent her head. Lick Creek Jim was a trifle awed by that which she had told him, for it had seemed somehow like a benediction.

"The slim young white oak," he muttered. "What about it?"

Mary Sue Selford sat up straight. There was a good deal of defiance and no small measure of desperation in her countenance when she answered—

"It might ha' been a fool notion in me, but I named it for you."

"For me?" Lick Creek Jim said awkwardly.

"Yes, you. Jim Lane."

He knew then. He knew. She had forgotten him no more than he had forgotten her. He took her hand, that usually undemonstrative mountaineer, and kissed it. If only he wasn't an outlaw. . . .

Lane went to his feet, his rifle's barrel grasped tightly. His other hand, big and trembling with something other than pity, caressed her bowed head with a great reverence.

"Listen, honey," he said softly, yet tensely. "You don't haf to leave here until gunpowder quits burnin'. You've got my word for it, which ain't never yit been broke. They outlawed me for nothin', and now I'm ready to make good on it—I'm ready to live up to the name they gi' me. Who's the super o' the Bad Ax camp, Mary Sue?"

"Blackton Adler." It came thickly; and she went on: "He said if I'd marry him, he'd leave all these trees standin' and we could live on here as long as we wanted to."

Lane had gone white before she finished telling this part of it. His rifle fairly leaped into the crook of his left arm. He gripped its breech as though he meant to crush wood and steel together.

"Black Adler!" It was a bleak, angry growl. "Black Adler, eh? I know him, Mary. I know him dang well. I know him better'n he knows hisself. I'll go now, Mary Sue, and recollect this: as long as powder burns, you can stay here and the trees won't be cut. Don't you cry any more, Mary. There ain't goin' to be any need of it."

He turned and walked proudly, as straight as the slim young oak that bore his name, toward the camp on the creek above. Once he caught a glimpse of a gaunt, grinning face in the evergreen laurels.

Now and then one finds in these Southern mountains, as in any other logging country in the world, a superintendent who is a driver and a breaker of men. The camps of these fellows are almost invariably ports for the missing in one degree or in another: that is to say, there are workers who hail from all

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points of the compass, who have their own reasons for burying themselves in the back o' beyond of the woods.

Generally, the man-breaking superintendent stands between them and the law and yet holds the sword of the law over them, puts half their wages into his own pocket, and treats them more as slaves than as timberjacks.

Blackton Adler was a typical superintendent of this class, and his camp was more than a typical port for the missing in that every man there had a record that he didn't care to have published. Adler was as big as a Patagonian, as shrewd as a French ambassador, and as brutal as any savage. His standing offer to surrender his job to any man who whipped him was not a sporting proposal, because he believed it a feat that no man could accomplish.

THE Summer sun had set, and the long twilight of the mountain valley had set in, when Jim Lane reached the Upper Bad Ax camp. Booted and broad-hatted and corduroyed loggers, men of all ages and sizes and half a dozen nationalities, were coming in from the woods, and their countenances were hang-dog and restless or devil-may-care and desperate. Lick Creek Jim hailed one of them.

"Where'll I find Black?"

The timberjack addressed hardly noticed the newcomer. Only the careless jerk of his thumb toward the commissary told Lane that he had heard. Lane hastened in the direction indicated, and an open door in one end of the unpainted building showed him a scarred desk and a huge, corduroyed man seated in a scarred swivel-chair before it. This was Adler's office, and the outlaw walked in, unannounced.

"Hi, Black," he said harshly.

Adler was busily putting down figures on his daily time-sheet, and he didn't look around just then. But he spoke.

"Hi, Lick Creek. Through in a minute, Lick Creek."

Lane was not surprised that Adler remembered not only his name but his voice. Adler had good reason for this. The Upper Bad Ax superintendent kept religiously at his figuring until he had finished; then he wheeled in his chair with a quickness that seemed odd in a man of such great size, and at his hip he held a big-bored revolver trained straight at Lane's stomach.

"The way you talk is pretty good evidence that you're after trouble, Lick Creek," he said with a smile that was half threat and half polar ice.

With the other hand he turned the left lapel of his coat and brought to light the badge of a sheriff's deputy; the logging company had done that in order that he might take care of its woods interests properly. He continued:

"You see where you stand, Lick Creek; don't you? You're wanted. There's a reward for you, and I always could use a little more real money than I had. There's not a thing to keep me from killing you if I like, Lick Creek."

For a moment Lane only stared. Adler shifted his gaze once, for a second, but he didn't lower the revolver's barrel. Then Lane smiled, and it, unlike that of Adler, was all polar ice.

"That's a sort o' funny way to treat a' old mate, Black, ain't it?" he said bitingly. "You purty near make me think you're somehow afraid o' me, Black. If you was to shoot me for the reward, it'd be a' awful raw deal, after the deal you handed me on Pigeon. But you ain't goin' to shoot, Black. You ain't got the guts.

"It ain't that you ain't low-down enough: it's because you know you cain't hit me in the heart or in the forrard from the hip like that, and you know I can git you with this here rifle if you don't hit me in the heart or the forrard the fust shot. That's why. You're shy on guts, 'Blacksnake.' "

"What—what deal do you mean, on Pigeon?" frowned Adler—as though he himself had forgotten.

Lick Creek Jim sniffed.

"Oh, you know, all right. That gazzy-boo who come with you to Pigeon, that smooth carder, that low-down piker you called 'Squareface.' He knowed somethin' on you, and you paid him money to keep him quiet. I seen you do it a dozen times, Black. That night when I shot to skeer him and see him burn the wind down the road—he was a cussed coward, as you know—you shot and killed him, and I got the blame. That was the deal you handed me, your mate, on Pigeon. And I couldn't git no proof that I never done it. Better put up that gun, Black. I'm not here after trouble, in pa'tickler; I'm here askin' for a square deal for somebody else. And I want a job, and pertection from the law, Black."

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It was now plain enough to Adler that he had nothing to gain by keeping Lane covered from the hip like that; Lane had called his hand. Adler threw off his bellicose air, and placed his revolver on the desk. Lick Creek Jim dropped to a box, with his rifle lying comfortably across his knees, and began to make a spirited appeal in the names of Granny Selford and Mary Sue.

It was customary for the logging companies to leave the mountaineers their simple homes and the trees around them, though all the land really belonged to the logging companies. Adler, Lane declared, should be as good as the rest in observing this unwritten law of human kindness.

Lick Creek Jim soon forgot even his own pride, soon forgot even his deep contempt for the man who had outlawed him, in his plea for justice for the girl he loved and yet never expected to be in a position to marry. He implored, pleaded, begged.

And Adler fooled him neatly. The nature of Lane was open and above board; to him, cunning was small and mean, and it was extremely difficult for him to understand it in another person.

"I guess you're right, Lick Creek," the Bad Ax superintendent said when the mountaineer had finished. "I'll let the Selfords stay, and I won't chop down their trees. As to marrying Mary Sue, I was merely teasing her. Marriage is only a trick of nature's to keep the human race from dying out, and I'm not strong on what becomes of the world after I'm cashed up. So if you're willing, Lick Creek, you and I will let bygones be bygones—though I'm not saying I killed Squareface, you understand. I'll give you a foreman's job, and I'll keep the law off."

Oddly or not, Lick Creek Jim took Blackton at his word. The very fairness and bigness of Lane, at least in this instance, worked against him. He rose from the box and held out his hand, and Adler rose and gripped it.

"I'm much obliged to you, Black," the outlawed man said almost with feeling. "We'll let bygones be bygones, and I'll show you what a fust-class logger I am."

"Good old Lick Creek!" Adler exclaimed with a fine imitation of comradeship—and Lane swallowed it all, hook and line and sinker. "You're all wool and a yard wide, Lick Creek. Go to the boarding-house for supper, and then find you a bunk, any bunk you want, up-stairs."

Lane walked out. Adler watched him go, and laughed in his sleeve. The truth of the matter, it afterward developed, was that the Upper Bad Ax outfit was falling down badly in its output of logs, the company was kicking vigorously from its Johnsville headquarters, and Adler meant to keep the expert woodsman Lane only long enough to help him in a complete reorganization of his woods forces; then would come the arrest of Lane by the Johnsville sheriff, and he, Adler, would claim the reward.

While he stood there laughing silently, a tall and gaunt figure in rags stole like a ghost into the office, and there, before his eyes, deliberately traced out with a lean forefinger on the rough outer wall one word. Had that finger been chalk, it would have written this—

Bingo.

But the superintendent understood anyway.

"Get out of here, Bingo!" he ordered sharply. "Get out of here, you crazy lout!"

Bingo immediately disappeared. He left Adler staring after him thoughtfully. If there was anything in the world that shook Adler's nerves, it was Bingo.

Hungry as he was, Jime Lane found himself unable to enjoy his supper. There was a woful lack of common table manners. His new associates spoke neither to him nor to one another; when they wished food that they couldn't reach, they rose and walked around the table and got it. Never was there a suggestion of the pleasantries and good-natured bantering that Lick Creek Jim had been accustomed to finding in logging-camps. Disgusted, he finished the meal first, rose from the table, and faced back to it.

"You fellers," he said, "eat like hawgs. I've got the promise o' being' a reg'lar boarder here, fellers, and I want to give you this infermation: I'm shore goin' to hand the next man a bash on the nose what I see takin' out butter with his coffee spoon, or meat with his fingers. If you don't believe it, try it. I'm Lick Creek Jim, from Pigeon, and I'm named right—which is sayin' I can lick any two o' you gazzyboos at the same time!"

He couldn't resist the temptation to boast of his prowess as a fighter. Anyway, Black

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Adler would protect him, in the event his name got him into trouble there on Bad Ax. Nobody took up the gauntlet, and he walked out.

Instead of going up-stairs to find a bed for himself, however, he went toward the home of the Selfords to tell them the good news he had.

When Lane left Mary Sue and her grandmother that night, he went toward Upper Bad Ax's purgatory of a boarding-house altogether happy, the great hopelessness notwithstanding.

THREE weeks passed almost quietly. Lick Creek Jim Lane had become the real power behind the logging operations, and logs were pouring from the woods; organization of the woods gangs and the putting of each man into the place for which he was best suited had worked wonders. Even as great a change had Lane wrought at the boarding-house. "Please" had come to be the reigning word at mealtime. Blackton Adler had left the girl strictly alone during those three weeks, thereby further deceiving Lane and the Selfords.

Then Adler, one peaceful Sunday afternoon, eavesdropped Lick Creek Jim and the girl he loved while they sat among the ferns on the bank of Bad Ax Creek and talked over the things that were paramount in their lives; and on the following morning Adler sent a carefully worded letter to the Johnsville sheriff by the first log train that left for the lowland.

That he himself did not arrest Jim Lane was no point in his favor; he feared to attempt it single-handed. There was small danger, he decided, in causing Lane's apprehension. True, the outlaw knew more or less concerning the records of his associates; but he held nothing against them, and he certainly was not the man to tell things for pure spite. Besides, Lane's word would count for little or nothing, if he did tell.

Lick Creek Jim had orders from his superintendent to look over a knocking skidder engine at noontime of that Monday, therefore he did not go with the others to the boarding-house for the noonday meal. Adler had made his plans well, except for the fact that he had not taken into account the mysterious Bingo.

Just when Lane was deepest in his examination of the engine, a stone fell beside him; it had been thrown from a point almost a hundred yards up on a near-by mountainside for the purpose of drawing his attention. He turned his eyes upward and saw Bingo's lean face, and to him it seemed unwontedly grave.

"Well?" he said.

With one hand Bingo pointed down the track that led to the camp clearing; with the other he motioned toward a thick wall of laurels that stood back of the skidder. Lane suspected the truth; he dived for the laurels, hid himself and watched. Soon Sheriff Mott and the superintendent, their revolvers drawn, appeared at the logging-machine; they looked about them, looked at each other, and seemed both surprised and disappointed.

"You've got another guess comin', Black!" cried Lane; and with that parting shot he ran farther into the undergrowth.

They did not follow him into the dense maze; it would have been useless, and they knew it. He circled and climbed the steep mountainside, going toward the point at which he had seen Bingo. But Bingo was gone when Lane reached the spot. Lane now saw the sheriff and Adler standing beside the skidder, apparently arguing; he took advantage of this, hurried to the boarding-house and secured his rifle, and again took to the cover of the laurels.

When Lane had seen Sheriff Mott board a loaded logging train for the lowland that afternoon, he sat himself down to think and to plan. Mott was out of the way for the present, and he had only Black Adler to cope with. Adler, he told himself, would proceed shortly to torment Mary Sue once more. Perhaps the girl, for her grandmother's sake, would even give in to marrying the man-breaking superintendent. Old people may not be moved easily from one home to another—for the other is never home to them. Sooner or later in the approaching gantlet of desperation, Mary would be quite sure to take the path of least resistance, and sacrifice herself.

So Jim Lane, outlaw, appointed himself a standing army of one man to protect the girl and her grandmother. If it became necessary for him to kill for them, then he would kill for them. There was nothing vengeful about it; if he took human life, it would be done for the Selfords.

He had to see Mary Sue and tell her of

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that which had taken place, and not long after nightfall he stole down the valley and toward the homey little cabin that stood in the shelter of those loved and beautiful trees—Elijah, Saul, Aaron, David and poor Absalom, great Samson and Delilah, the hemlock, and slim young Jim Lane. There was, he saw as he drew near to the log house, a light in the best room, and he feared the presence of visitors; like a shadow he stole to an open window of that best room, and peered cautiously in.

His fears were not unfounded, and the visitor was Black Adler himself! Adler stood just inside the front doorway, and squarely before him stood Mary Sue. The girl's face seemed strikingly bloodless and distraught, there in the yellow light of the oil lamp. Then Lane noted that old Granny Peg sat beside the fireless stone fireplace, with her white head bowed to her palsied hands.

"You can't go on living like this," the Bad Ax superintendent was saying. "You don't have half enough to eat, or half enough to wear. I'll make a lady of you, Mary. Dressed up, you'd make a killer; you wouldn't believe it was you! We'll take care of Granny Peg, all right. After all, a husband's a husband; and the wise woman is the one who marries a man who can provide for her. I'm tired of waiting, Mary. What do you say?"

Lick Creek Jim pressed closer against the window-ledge. He saw Mary Sue look toward her grandmother, who raised her head and showed him a drawn and pitiful countenance. Then the girl turned defiantly back to Adler.

"Yes, a husband's a husband, and also a dawg's a dawg," she said evenly. "If I was a man, I think I'd shoot you, Black."

"Aymen!" creaked Granny Peg. "God helpin' us, we'll live in a hole in the rocks, Black Adler, ef it's necessary, afore Mary sh'll marry sech a ongodly, durned varmint as you!"

The superintendent's brutal face became yet more brutal. As though to taunt him, there came at that instant a long-drawn and eery cry from somewhere in the dark woodland—

"Bingo-o-o!"

Adler wheeled with an involuntary shudder, and he found himself staring into the muzzle of a Winchester in the hands of Lick Creek Jim.

"Be keerful you don't move toward your hip, Black," warned Lane. "Shootin's too good for you, but I'm half a mind to do it. Listen, Black. From this minute on, I'm the gyardeen o' these two wimmen. These trees ain't goin' to be cut while powder burns, and you've got my word for it; the fust man who sticks a' ax into one of 'em is shore goin' to hear bullet music.

"You're the low-downest man in the world, Black. Anybody that'd try bully-raggin' a decent woman into marryin' him, ought to be killed for the good o' the country. It simply ain't fo'givable. If you don't stop it, I'm going' to send you to your two-by-six under the acorns; do you git that, you copperhead?"

Adler's smile was wicked.

"You're in a position, Lick Creek," he sneered, nodding toward the rifle's muzzle, "for big talk. Put that down, and I'll thrash you, Lick Creek."

"And you with a young machine-gun on your hip!" laughed Lane. "I'll put this rifle down, I don't think. But I'll give you the chanst to thrash me in a fair fight, Black, and that before very long. You wait. If I die without gluin' your face to the back o' your neck, I'll die mighty bad unsatisfied. Your business here is over, and you're due at the camp right now—good night, Blacksnake. Fasten the door after him, Mary Sue!"

LANE stepped backward and out of the shaft of lamplight that shone through the doorway, and was swallowed up in the darkness. Adler gave the girl a beaten glance, and walked slowly out. Mary Sue closed the door and barred it, and put out the light. As she extinguished the sputtering yellow flame, she heard her tormentor call to her sweetheart:

"Bring on that scrap, Lick Creek, at the earliest possible moment. I'm spoiling for it!"

"Bingo!" cried Bingo, from the near-by woods.

Lane made no reply.

After having made sure that his arch enemy had really gone to the camp, Jim Lane stole back to the cabin of the Selfords and to an open window.

"Mary!" he said softly.

She came to the window and leaned against the ledge; he leaned against it from the outside. Then he told her all he had

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come to tell her, not forgetting to lay before her his now somewhat revised and more sensible plans of guardianship. He wouldn't shoot to kill the Bad Ax loggers when they came to chop down her trees; he could easily frighten them away without making a murderer of himself.

"As for givin' Black a chanst to fight me fair," he went on, "he can shore have it. I've already got it figgered out. All his loggers will be in camp on Sunday mornin', o' course; and on Sunday mornin' I'll walk into the clearin' jest after breakfast, and tackle him before all his men, and where do you think he'll stand with his cutthroat outfit when I've put a lickin' on him? He won't stand nowhere! He hardly ever wears a gun to breakfast, I happen to know."

"No loggin'-camp super ever amounts to anything after he's been whipped," murmured Mary Sue, which is very nearly as true as Gospel. "Black don't believe you can whip him, Jim, or he'd never push it like he done."

"O' course he don't," Jim replied; "but Black's got a surprise-package comin' to him, Mary. I know what you think, Mary. You think Black's goin' to try to hawg me by havin' his men ketch me. Now, don't you worry none about that. I'll fix that part——"

Suddenly Lane broke off, dashed toward the ground at his left, and closed his powerful arms about the lithe body of a man who had been listening. The two struggled, but Lane was vastly the stronger. When he had the unknown in an easy hold, he called in a low voice to the anxious girl:

"Make a light, Mary, and open the front door. I want to see who this gazzyboo is I got here."

Mary Sue obeyed at once. Lick Creek Jim carried his man bodily to the lighted doorway, and peered into his face.

"Bingo!" he exclaimed. "Of all the—look here, Bingo, old hoss, what does this mean? You've done me several favors, and one mighty big favor; I owe you thanks, all right, but I shore don't like to be eavesdropped!"

Bingo had ceased altogether to struggle. Lane put him to his feet, and he stood there grinning. The girl stepped to the ground and touched the queer one on the arm.

"Bingo," she said appealingly, "we're all in a bad shape here, me and Jim and Granny Peg, and 'specially Jim. You must be our friend, if you can. I don't know who or what you are, Bingo, but I don't believe you're much of a idiot. Now please don't you do anything to hurt us, and 'specially Jim!"

Lane watched closely. Evidently Bingo understood something of her meaning, for his grin became a smile, and he patted her shoulder in a manner that seemed reassuring. Then he walked off into the darkness, and Jim Lane put out no hand to stay him.

When Bingo had been out of her sight for five seconds, Mary Selford turned to her companion.

"There's somethin' I want to say," she half whispered. "Granny Peg is goin' to fiddle out some day, and I'll be all by myself with my heart broke. When that time comes, Jim, I'm willin' to marry you and be a' outlaw with you. You said you'd never l-love anybody but me, and I—I want you to have me. But maybe we could go away off—some'eres where nobody knows you, and live in peace. Maybe——"

The outlaw dropped his rifle lightly to the ground at his feet, and put his arms around her.

"It wouldn't be treatin' you right, Mary," he declared. "But recollect this, Mary," he continued: "wherever you go, I'll be nigh you to keep off danger from you. It's my lifetime job. Powder burns, and the last teeny drop o' Jim Lane's blood belongs to you."

HALF a dozen times during that week, Blackton Adler sent a woods gang to take down Mary Selford's towering first temples of God; half a dozen times the outlawed mountaineer shot from the laurels and spun bullets from ax blades and cross-cut saws; and just that many times the timberjacks beat a wild retreat to the camp. The last of these attempts was led by Adler himself, and he wore back to his office a high-peaked gray hat with a neat .38 hole through its crown.

Came Sunday morning, bright and fair. According to his custom, the Bad Ax superintendent left his coat and his revolver in his sleeping-quarters, went to the long and rough boarding-house porch and bathed his face and his hands in a tin basin, brought into service his own private towel, and strutted in to breakfast.

When the meal was over, the woodsmen

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and Adler gathered on the porch and lighted their pipes. While Adler was telling a story in which the perpendicular pronoun played an overwhelming part, a big young man in boots and corduroy trousers, both hatless and shirtless, strode into the clearing. It was Lane. He had come for the reckoning.

Adler halted abruptly in his story. He recognized the silent challenger, and began to remove his shirt. Soon he too was stripped to the waist and bareheaded, and he went toward the stalwart Lane with a confident swing to his step and to his giant shoulders. Lane had drawn up near the center of the clearing, on smooth ground.

"Come along, boys!" bellowed Adler. "This wampus has persuaded himself to fight me for my job, and watch me feed him dirt!"

His men hurried after him. He halted squarely before Lane.

"I understand," began Lick Creek Jim, "that this is to be a fair scrap. No gun, no knife, and no outside help. Am I right?"

"Right," Black Adler echoed. "Where do you want to be buried, Lick Creek?"

"It don't really matter much," the mountaineer drawled whimsically. "Howsomeever, you've got my pe'mission to sink my corpst in your pussonal graveyard, beside o' the corpstes o' them other folks you've killed."

The loggers had formed a ring of morbidly interested faces around the pair. Lane looked them over with narrowed eyes. It was then that he essayed the first tricky cunning of his life, and he did it without employing a straight lie.

"You fellers that's thinkin' o' givin' me a rotten deal," he said threateningly, "might recollect I've got a few good friends left. And you might recollect that some o' them same friends might be hid in the laurels close about, with rifles handy, to see that I git a fair showin'. Well, Blacksnake—ready?"

"More than ready," bristled Adler; and he led out with a terrific blow.

Lane parried it nicely, and pasted a stiff one on the superintendent's jaw. It staggered Adler, and he came back swearing. Lane met him with an uppercut punch at the bottom of the breastbone, and again he swore; but the outlawed man risked too much a moment later, and he received a straight left over the eyes, which temporarily blinded him and drove him reeling through the ring of loggers and to the ground on his back.

Adler sprang after him and murderously poised a heavy boot to disfigure his face forever with its calks, but Lane quickly rolled from under and went nimbly to his feet. Followed some minutes of fierce pommeling, in which the battle became bloody and leaned to the advantage of neither.

But such hard fighting had to tell, and that which turned the tide in Jim Lane's favor was thoughts of Mary, Mary. If he failed to win, not only was he lost—the girl was lost too! He realized that he had been unwise to give this battle, under the circumstances. So he brought all his strength and panther-like quickness into play, rushed Adler again and again, took the bitterest punishment bravely, and finally began to beat the bigger man back. The Bad Ax superintendent soon lost all sense of generalship, and Lane pounded him without mercy.

Then, just as Adler was ready to take the count, a satellite who still had a foolish belief in him slyly tripped Lane, who fell a hard fall backward and out of the ring, his head striking a stone, dazing him. Adler, insane in his rage, produced a spring-opener woodsman's knife and dove staggeringly after the supine Lick Creek Jim.

With blood-filled eyes, Lane saw the crimson-faced giant coming, but somehow he didn't care. Dimly he heard a shout from the laurels; dimly he saw his adversary poise the blade over his heart—a rifle and a revolver cracked as one from somewhere along the edge of the clearing, and Blackton Adler, wounded to death, crumpled across the limp body of the man who had whipped him fairly.

"Mary!" Jim Lane mumbled regretfully, his consciousness flaring up for a single second; he knew Mary could handle a rifle.

Then all became dark.

During the five minutes that followed, Sheriff Mott and a posse and the two owners of the logging company, all of them armed, broke from the woods around the clearing. But it was none of these who had shot Blackton Adler.

MORE than an hour later, Lick Creek Jim came to as completely as though he had only awakened from sleep. He lay in a bed in the Selfords' cabin, and Mary Sue and Granny Peg stood

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over him. Upon seeing that his senses had returned, the stooped old woman gave him a smile that was half worship, and left the room. The girl bent lower, and Lane wondered why her eyes were so bright and so glad.

"Jim!" she said. She went on: "Jim, you don't know all o' what happened, so listen and I'll tell you. Soon after Bingo shot Adler——"

"Bingo!" joyfully broke in Lane. "Then it wasn't you!"

"No," she smiled, "but it come mighty nigh bein' me. I had the rifle that used to be my daddy's, and I was watchin' from the laurels. I shot at the same time Bingo shot, but I missed. I heard you say you might have friends to see you git a straight deal, Jim, and you did have 'em—Bingo at one place and me at another.

"Sheriff Mott and his men got every one o' Adler's gang, and Adler's dead, and there ain't nothin' much against you! Black never confessed about the killin' o' that—that Squareface; but Bingo had found out all about it on Pigeon—he'd been idiotin' around over there, too, and he knowed everything! He——"

At that instant, a tall and lanky man hastened into the cabin and to Lane's bedside, leaned over and took up Lane's battered right hand. It was Bingo himself, and he began to talk rapidly.

"Good luck, Lane—I'm saying good-by. I congratulate you on winning this fine little woman, and I congratulate you on making good as superintendent under Adler—I've just learned that the company is willing to pay you out of whatever little trouble there is left for you, in order to keep you here as boss of the Bad Ax in your own right! In a great hurry, Lane; must go back with Mott. Somebody else will tell you all about me—good-by!"

He dropped the bruised hand of Lick Creek Jim, and ran out. The dumfounded Lane gave Mary Sue an inquiring look.

"Bingo," she explained, "is a Gov'ment agent, or Secret Service officer, or somethin'. He's been gittin' lines on Adler and every one o' his gang for months, and when the fight come off was the time he picked for roundin' 'em all up in a bunch. The sheriff and his posse and the comp'ny men got out here a few minutes late, Jim, and Adler wouldn't listen when Bingo yelled for him to stop; so Bingo and me shot at Adler to save you—and, oh, Jim, thank goodness I missed and he didn't, because he's a' officer of the law, and I ain't!"

Neither Mary nor the man she was soon to marry ever knew the truth: for the sake of their future peace of mind, Bingo had deceived every soul of them—Bingo himself had missed, and not Mary! His revolver had carried steel-jacketed balls, and the rifle plain lead, and plain lead had killed Adler.

Lane rose, and the girl pointed through the open doorway. Lick Creek Jim looked and saw old Granny Peg in the cabin's narrow yard, her wizened face a picture of happiness.

She was standing there with her thin arms stretched out lovingly toward those silent and beautiful temples of the Almighty—Elijah and Saul and Aaron, David and Absalom, Samson and Delilah, and slim young Jim Lane.

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HIGH TRAIL AND HOME TRAIL

by Charles Tenney Jackson

Author of "A Little Jigger This Mornin'."

"IF YOU was king of everything," pursued Lell, curled up like a cat in the sun on the big redwood stump by the cook-house door, "what'd you do, Jimmy?"

"I'd chase Indians," said the boy importantly. "I'd go 'way up the old Hoopa trail where there's Indians. The sheriff said so. I'd chase 'em clean up the top o' the mountains and make 'em jump off, and then I'd shoot at 'em with my bow-gun."

"I wouldn't," mused the girl. "I'd take the Hyampom trail where there's fairies—Rose Dewey said so."

"LISTEN, now," whispered Rose to the sheriff just within the cook-house door. "And those are the kids that the agent for the home-findin' society is comin' here to get and then shut 'em up in an asylum. Ain't this camp cared for 'em all right since Farley was killed when the bull-line broke? I guess Camp 9 can care for its own!"

"Sure. But it's a court order, Rose. You're the only woman here any more, and well-nigh a hundred men. They don't understand down in Eureka. The court instructed me to have Farley's kids here when the home-findin' man come up—and the train-boss says he'll be in at eight o'clock."

Rose of the cook-house sprang up. She was as full-bosomed as the Humboldt hills, her cheeks like the vine-maple, red upon the gray wall of the cañons; and the boys of Camp 9 called her black eyes "forty-rod" because you could see that depth in them.

"Eight o'clock!"

From the log-choked, fire-blackened scar which the slashin' made in the forested hills Rose looked down the cañon up which twisted the logging railroad from the misty bay of the North California coast.

"Things happen sometimes to town men that come sneakin' into the big redwoods when they ain't wanted!"

The girl leaped out to the ground: from the door of the cook-house one might have flung a chip across the entire settlement of shanties to the railroad's end at the loading platform, so cheerily did Camp cling to the slope of the slashin'.

"Lell!" she cried. "You and Jimmy! I know where there's Injuns and fairies forevermore!"

She ran about the big stump, and the sheriff heard eager voices raised. He walked to the other end of the cook-house and watched a redwood log that came roaring down a thousand-foot chute from the higher hills to leap and thunder against its fellows on the main bull-line.

The whistle of a donkey-engine came shrilly, warning the couplers and back-line men that the chute was open. Far down the cañon the sheriff saw the log-trucks rattling slowly up behind the locomotive. He hung his gun-belt looser and sauntered down to the loading-platform.

"Didn't suppose she'd mind so much—

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lisin' Farley's kids," he muttered. "But of they go to this here asylum, I reckon she'll quit the camp—it got too much for the rest of the wimmen. Farley's kids just kept her—that's all. Well, if that girl wanted to start a riot the camp'd throw me and the home-findin' man clean into the gulch—ain't no mistake about that!"

He saw the flash of a blue gingham dress and a small boy being hurried along the black cinder slope past the line of shanties and caught a glimpse of Rose Dewey standing intent, watching the puffing train crawl onward. Then she, too, vanished into the slashin'.

The sheriff looked puzzled a moment; then went on to greet the log-train boss as he swung down.

"Mornin', Steve!"

"Mornin', Kelso! Ye'r man's back there—ridin' the tail trucks. Didn't bring no caboose this trip—I guess y'er man got some bumpin', and when we hit the big trestle faster'n we ever took it, I guess he was prayin'."

"No caboose? How's he and me goin' to get the kids out o' the hills ridin' the logs?"

The train-boss grinned.

"Funny, how things happen. A couplin'-pin, or somethin', must have slipped—I didn't see just where the end trucker on my train lost the caboose."

Sheriff Kelso's gray eyes narrowed; he was not a man they trifled with up-in-back.

"Say, Steve! What's doin' up here?"

Steve's eyes were raised to the high, near slope. At the edge of the slashin' he caught a glimpse of blue, and the sun on a sun-bronzed head. The sheriff turned as the green abyss of the redwood forest hid the fugitives.

"Oh, we can wait! She'll bring 'em in—dinner-time."

"It's a big, rough country, Sheriff!" laughed Steve. "Funny how folks can hide-up! There's Banway, for instance now——"

The sheriff started.

"I'm after him for shootin' Mackey down at Arcata. Is he in them hills up there?"

"What I know could never hurt nobody. But it's a shame he didn't kill this Mackey, from all I hear, 'stead o' wingin' him!"

"Never mind. So Banway's took to hangin' out up above?"

The sheriff tapped Steve's arm as he saw the agent for the home-finding society approach—derby hat, cotton umbrella, magazine under arm—yellow with cañon dust clear up under his spectacles.

"Steve!" repeated the sheriff curtly. "What brings Banway over the ridge?"

"Kelso," retorted the train boss, "what brings you up here so much—'specially Sunday afternoons?"

For an instant the sheriff looked full at him; then up to the mountain-side. A little brown eagle circled slowly through the thinning fog, the fan of its tail outspread, its beady eye shooting alert glances downward, then it turned into the redwood tops at the edge of the slashin'. If anything had stirred in the giant ferns below, the little eagle feared it not at all.

"Gracious—me!" gasped the home-finders' agent. "Mr. Kelso, I never would have come—I never would have ventured—if I had known the accommodations! I actually had to ride just above the wheels—the roaring, awful wheels of that truck across the most awful cañons! I can not describe it—I—I'm all in a flutter——"

"Off the bull-line!" roared the train-boss. "Hey—you! When you hear that whistle up the chute, you wiggle! All they could bury of you would be a piece o' redwood bark, you'd be that smeared——"

The sheriff led his visitor from the loading area. At the cook-house the little man took off his spectacles, laid down his magazine and umbrella and looked at a squat, lowering Chinaman who was sharpening some evil knives.

"Gracious, is this the hotel?"

"There ain't any hotel."

"Well, how—can we leave with the children today?"

"I reckon. Sit down, Parson. Got the papers for the Farley kids, hey?"

"Certainly—certainly. The poor little things—this awful place—and we were told a woman of the camp—some sort of woman had them."

"Neve' mind about that! Slow on them remarks. All right—I'll get the kids for you, Parson."

"You'll render a wonderful service to society, Mr. Kelso."

"If I was you," returned the sheriff, "I'd kind o' stick close to the cook-house. That Chink'll feed you. I'll dust 'round for the kids. When the mob o' fellers come boilin' out o' the timber for dinner, why—

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if nobody asts you to eat, why you just sit down anyhow—kind o' close to the China-man's door, and——"

"Nobody asks me? Why, I've heard the camps are the most hospitable places—in spite of—of—everything else!"

"Some men," mused the sheriff, "can drop in for dinner and stay five months; and some—well, so long. I'll shag up the ridge."

BY TEN o'clock the sun was over the mountain. From ridge to ridge the slashin' was filled with dusty light like the brown blown from a moth's wings; but from the forest encircling at the tops there fell cold-water drops hundreds of feet down from the redwood branches as the ocean fogs, entangled there, slowly condensed.

The sun could not reach through to the immense ferns which hedged about one big weather-whitened stump. Twenty-two feet across it was, and the top fifteen feet above the ground, so that one could only reach the round little fortress by a few leafy vines up the side.

There, in the cold, damp stillness, two children crouched. Lell had her arm around Jimmy, and they shivered, now and then; and looked out wistfully to where the sunshine fell in the deep, tawny valley. There the black slashin' showed, and from where the invisible "fallers" worked patiently for a day to cut down a single tree, now and then came a tremendous, distant roar as a four-hundred-foot redwood crashed down to its improvised cradle in the lesser growth.

The little girl crept cautiously to the edge of the redwood stump and looked down to the left. Through the forest of iron spikes with the tangled green at their tops she could see, hundreds of feet below, the black pools of Little River, the boulders, big as city houses, all barred from the sunshine by the thousand-year-old redwoods.

The hills were cloud-piercing; the gulches abysmal, the trees Titanic; the ferns would hide an elephant; when it rained the fall was cataclysmal, when it was calm the silence appalling; and when the wind came off the Pacific the roar in the forest drowned the bull-throated sea—everywhere a giant's country such as where the hammer of Thor strove with the gods of Valhalla, or Wodin with his drinking-horn lowered the sea and shook the foundations of the world.

A wren, no bigger than a thimble, lit suddenly by Lell's hand; she watched it quietly—perhaps it would change to her fairy queen! Then she came back to the boy crouched in the hollow of the immense stump.

"I'm hungry," he wailed. "Where's Rose gone all mornin'?"

"She's findin' 'em for us," said the girl solemnly. "Indians and draggins, and fairies—and then nobody can shut us up in the 'sylum, when Dewey Rose finds 'em all!"

Jimmy gazed out with eyes of faith and wonder. But he was hungry; he, too, crept to the edge of the great stump and watched downward. A glimpse of the slashin'—the mile square of ruined wilderness where men and steel cables and log chutes were sucking the heart out of the redwood forests.

But back and up was the cool, silent dripping jungle of the North; and where the trails lay to the high hills above the redwood belt no man could say. Once far below them toward the slashin' the children saw a horseman—watching. Then he rode along the side of a redwood log and nothing but the high peak of his hat showed above its girth.

"Hungry," repeated the shivering child. "Why don't she bring 'em?"

"You wait," retorted Lell. "And there—see the little eagle that's always about—he sees something up above!"

They watched the lengthening circles of the eagle's flight—wider, farther, into the mists of the slopes above. Lell started upright, listening.

"There!" she whispered. "Maybe it's your Indians!"

The small adventurer's eyes widened with mingled hope and dismay. He looked about; then he drew the wooden bow-gun that the kitchen-buck had made him, fitted an arrow to the groove and walked importantly to the edge of the great stump.

"Well, don't you be scared, sister!" he quavered. "I'll bow-gun 'em—or maybe it's a grizzly bear!"

"Or maybe it's the fairy queen like a beautiful lady with wings! Oh, Jimmy—don't you shoot!"

Something stirred on the slope above it; it was not a deer's step in the ferny brakes, nor the flirt of a jay in the manzanita. Smothered laughter for an instant; a woman's voice.

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"Banway! Come, see!"

"I'm watchin' the sheriff. Can he pick up that trail, Dewey Rose?"

"I'll have to take 'em higher, then!"

From the gloom of the giant ferns a man and a woman peered out to the big stump where Jimmy with his bow-gun ready—a spot of scarlet was his shirt—stood facing valiantly the forests of Thor.

"I see a man," he quavered, but stoutly, "ridin' up the cañon. Don't you be scared of the 'sylum, sister, for I'll bow-gun him!"

The children heard a whisper in the ferns. A lean, bronzed young face peered out and over the slope; and by Banway's shoulder stood Rose of the slashin'.

"Joe Kelso," whispered Rose, "and he's wondering which side to come up!" Then she turned to the outlawed youth. "Anse," she went on fiercely, "you got to go, now! I ain't been runnin' grub up in the hills all these weeks just to have you captured!"

"And leave these kids dreamin' of hill fairies and Injuns to go be shut up in an asylum? Dewey Rose, how'd you like that?"

"They won't be——"

"Yes. Kelso ain't easy to shake! I been hangin' around up here just to be near you, Rose—just love o' you!"

"Yes—and the sheriff—" she laughed—"been up to camp, too—every Sunday!"

Anse shifted his rifle and watched.

"All right! Then him and me, we meet at last!"

"No." She clung to his arm. "I never told him why you shot Mackey—Mackey who runs the big store down in the flat, and is in politics and all! 'Devil Anse' the sheriff calls you; and you just a kid devilin' 'round the dances!"

"Give a dog a bad name and hang him," murmured Devil Anse. "What's a lumberjack's dance for anyhow, if a cowman cain't come down from the high country and devil 'em a little?"

"And you're goin' to quit bein' Devil Anse," she retorted. "I ain't been stickin' out all these weeks at the cook-house, the only woman left there, if it wasn't to make a man out of Devil Anse!"

There was silence in the engulfing ferns. Out in the bit of clearing, the children on the big stump had cried out together.

"He's comin'! Jimmy! Where's Dewey Rose?"

Devil Anse came leaping from the underbrush. The girl swept an arm out vainly to detain him.

"No!" she cried. "You mustn't fight him!"

"He cain't have 'em! Not hill kids like Jimmy and Lell!"

Banway held his arms laughingly up to the small boy who stared wonderingly down.

"Kid! I know where the Injuns is!"

"Anse," the girl cried, "you can't escape if you take 'em!"

His laughing face grew hard again.

"I know a valley—'way-up-in-back, where my cattle run. 'Way up off the Hoopa trail—a little valley where nobody gets in. It's sunny, and there's little flowers all along the trail—and maybe Injuns and fairies—and my two hosses are up this ridge—packed. Been waitin' for you, Dewey Rose!"

"Anse!" she cried again. "You know I can't!"

"The sheriff's wonderin' which trail up. There—he's startin' this side!"

He swung the small girl after her brother. Fearsomely, yet with trust, they looked at Devil Anse.

"Are you the draggin?" queried Lell earnestly.

"Draggin? I can choke and eat 'em, kids! Draggins is my meat—but sheriffs is——"

"He's comin'," whispered Rose. "Wait—I'll go parley him down there!"

"Lead him up the other side the creek—let him see you, but keep goin'! A mile up Little River there's a big redwood down across the gulch—never made for a hoss to travel, but you—well, we'll be waitin' there, on this side!"

SHE stared, nodded; then slipped down the mountainside to the giant boulders of the creek bed. And, a hand to each of Farley's orphans, Banway stole back in the ferns.

"Where's Rose," whimpered Lell, "and are you the draggin?"

He was laughing softly. Higher through the cool, damp redwoods he found a way, and at last they stood where the sun lay, warm and yellow, on the dusty manzanita above the belt of giant timber. The children were staring over the cañon's rim as Banway tightened the cinches on his two pack-animals. Then he swung one child upon each horse and led off and upward.

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A half mile and they came out on a jutting rock four hundred feet above the singing river. There the fugitive stopped and lay out flat on the stone, drawing his rifle up so that its muzzle swept the further slope. Far down the widening cañon the little brown eagle circled again, watching among the giant boulders and deep pools of Little River.

"Will she come?" muttered Devil Anse. "If not I'll go face him, and it'll be more'n a devilin' kid 'round the dances that Kelso'll see! It'll be me—Anson Banway—fightin' for his own!"

And after many minutes he caught a flutter of blue down in the gloomy redwood depths. And as he watched a horseman rode about the boulders of the creek bed. Again the man from the country-up-in-back searched the further slope. Again that flirt of a blue gown. Again the slowly climbing horseman.

"Not much more on that hoss," murmured Devil Anse. "And there! He's shoutin' at her! Maybe she's stopped—maybe she don't know the trail to the big tree crossin'!"

He glanced out and above. Here the redwoods ended, giving way to the growth of the higher altitude, and here the last of them had fallen out across the narrow gulch from which ran the springs that fed the pools of Little River—a sun-whitened footbridge two hundred feet from base to top, and under it the cañon was an abyss, five hundred feet of sheer drop.

Banway watched it dubiously.

Then a shout down the cañon, startlingly near. Still, Banway could see nothing. But presently, out from the green slope across he saw a blue gown; Rose climbed down the jutting rocks to the base of the redwood bridge, out upon it, steadily on a hundred feet, and then she sat down on the great log and stared back. Somewhere the sheriff was shouting. Then he struggled out, stopped, stared across the gulf and roared again:

"Rose! Come back from there! You'll go a quarter mile down into the gulch if you——"

He heard her laughter.

"End o' the trail, Kelso! End o' the trail for town men and lumberjacks, too! Up above it's hoss country—but no hosses reach it thisaway, now, do they?"

The sheriff spurred his tired mount on and up a rod, then stopped. He could swing off and climb afoot for twenty feet more. Then—well, the girl had arisen, stood poised above the gulf, twirling Anse Banway's blue automatic pistol. She was laughing as she looked down in the dizzy deeps.

"A gun!" Kelso frowned. "Say, where's the kids, Rose Dewey?"

"Draggins," Rose answered clearly, "must have got 'em. And it's dangerous here—for town men and sheriffs, too!"

He was watching behind her keenly to the far side of Little River Cañon.

"Draggins?" Kelso muttered. "Devil Anse—and you——"

"You swore you loved me, didn't you, Kelso?" the girl called. "But when Mackey called me something at the dance that you'd have killed him for yourself, it was just the devilin' kid, Anse, that took it up. He winged Mackey, and took to the hills, and Mackey wasn't man enough to explain."

"Banway never explained, either," retorted the sheriff, "nor you——"

"What for? Just to get more talked about? It ain't just our way. It's just like Farley's kids—how could hill folks ever explain to town folks why they ain't to be shut up in no asylum?"

Rose walked on; in the middle of the great log she stopped, looked back, raised her strong arms and called again.

"You comin', Sheriff? Devil Anse is over the ridge with two pack-animals—and two kids goin' to find the fairies. And two guns, Kelso, but there's only one trail; it's high and narrow, and it leads to—oh, well, I'm goin' on and ask Devil Anse where it leads to!"

The sheriff watched Rose go on and climb steadily to the rocky margin across the gorge. Suddenly he sighed, and dropped his pistol back in the holster.

"I ain't asking," he muttered, "but I wonder now, what I started this chase for? To turn them little kids over to that fool home-findin' society, or just to get this answer from Dewey Rose once more?"

And when he had mounted at the trail's end, Kelso turned and waved an arm. The girl had come again to the jutting rock and called out gaily across the redwood gorge.

"I know, now, Kelso! Sure headed right for homeland, Devil Anse says! Right for the beautiful kingdom!"

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GABOREAU the TERRIBLE

A Five-Part Story

· CONCLUSION ·

by Gordon Young

Author of "Gaboreau," "Murder!" etc.

I HAD managed to take a ride two or three times at night and pass The Castle. It was a formidable looking place, enclosed by an iron fence in large and well-kept grounds. I approved of the isolated appearance as much as von Hartmann ever did. It no doubt gave him a better opportunity to use his wireless.

By dint of watching I had been able to have a number of people shadowed who passed in and out of the grounds, and finally spotted the one woman that seemed to answer my purpose. I located her apartment and learned her name: Gracia Valentine. I suppose she was beautiful. She at least thought so; and the traffic of her charms was not unprofitable.

Von Hartmann, who called himself plain Hartman, retired broker, was attentive. He frequently called and she frequently accompanied him to The Castle. When I had learned enough to make sure that she was not a spy, and seemed indeed to lack even the small amount of ability that is needed for spy work, I set about the scheme that appealed to me.

I bribed her maid to let me know a number of things about Miss Valentine; and the upshot of it was that one day when von Hartmann telephoned that he was coming around that afternoon the maid did not tell Miss Valentine, so she, unconscious of the visit, went shopping.

When von Hartmann arrived he found a beautiful, lithe, dark young woman making herself very much at home in Miss Valentine's apartment; and offered to him a note of introduction which Miss Valentine, upon being suddenly called down-town, had left. The note was to the effect that this beautiful dark woman was Miss Valentine's Austrian cousin, a recent widow, who really did not like Americans, but had been assured that she would like "Mr. Hartman." The hope was expressed that they would be good friends.

Vivian had some trouble in keeping the amorous "broker" at a distance which suited her taste but rather heightened his desire to become, as he phrased it "better acquainted." Vivian happens to be a very adroit coquette. She played with him skilfully, and though representing herself as an Austrian, intensely patriotic, she did not intimate that she suspected von Hartmann was other than an American; nor did he confide with her that he was not, though any one of perception—or without it—could readily enough have told that he had a predominance of Teutonic blood.

Men are not sent on such missions as von Hartmann was in charge of unless they have some qualities fitting them for the work; and von Hartmann would have been lacking in the one essential if he had revealed anything of his real identity to even an Austrian woman who seemed at once to get a strong hold on his fancy.

It is very well known that "big business" men do not let their weakness for chorus ladies interfere with their secrets on the Street; so there is really no reason why von Hartmann, if he always kept a close tongue, should not indulge his propensity for pretty women and remain an excellent spy chief.

He quite plainly expressed himself as

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anxious to take Vivian to dinner; but she appeared uninterested, though intimating that nothing could be more acceptable than his company.

He suggested a number of things, but nothing appealed to her.

Von Hartmann was a big, powerfully-built, big-jawed man, with light cold eyes and heavy, firm lips. He was plainly a man of temper and driving power. His voice was deep-throated, not husky, but far from musical or even agreeable; and there was something solid and implacable about him. The eyes, jaw and mouth bore the index to an extremely cruel character; but oddly enough there was nothing about him of the ordinary voluptuary, or even sensual person. There are some men who are cold-blooded even in their lusts—very few such men, but he was one of them.

He gazed at Vivian in that offensive, direct way that is sometimes described as "devouring" a person; and though Vivian was embarrassed she did not show it. She afterward admitted however that she would have been a little frightened except for the knowledge that I was less than twenty feet away with the closet door ajar and listening.

Finally in getting him to talk about himself and his home, von Hartmann mentioned quite casually that he had some pieces of china that were rare.

Instantly Vivian was all interest. Though she really knows nothing of china, or no more than any other housewife who readily pays fancy prices if the salesman is only skilful at palaver, she asked a dozen questions and did not wait for an answer, and impulsively said that she would like so much to see the china.

Von Hartmann rose to the bait like a hungry trout. If she would come to dinner she might gaze at it to her heart's content. Besides, he took pride in the service of his household and would be glad for her to see it—since she complained that the poor service in hotels and cafés spoiled the dinner. That being a thing Vivian had said to tempt him to invite her to his house.

"When will you come?" he asked.

"Any time—tonight?"

"Nothing could suit me better."

"Nor me. May I bring my maid?"

Von Hartmann looked at her keenly. I do not know what promptings of suspicion he may have had. I do not think that he had any. I believe he was surprised, but pleasantly surprised, as the suggestion of bringing a maid hinted that she would be in no hurry to leave his home—perhaps would need the service of the maid on the following morning.

Anyway, after a second of scrutiny, his face flashed with delight.

"By all means. Mine is a bachelor's home and I have no maids to offer you. Bring yours. And shall I call for you?"

"If you prefer, but I fancy a taxi could find the way. Supposing I say at eight. I shall be there at eight."

And as she said that, Vivian lifted a large black velvet cloak and placed it over her shoulders, drawing it about her in a way that completely enveloped her; then asked:

"How do you like it? Isn't it beautiful? Rather becoming to a widow, don't you think? I liked it so well that I had one just like it for my maid. She thinks it too funereal. Does it give me a hint of mystery? I hope so. I love mysteries."

Von Hartmann thought it beautiful, or said that he did, and shot out his two big arms to sweep her into an embrace; but she eluded him and laughed.

"No, no," she said. "It is tonight that you have me for dinner. Do not spoil your appetite by eating between meals. And you must not let Gracia know. She would be jealous. She was so sure of you that she did not mind leaving me to entertain you for a few minutes."

"Let her be jealous. She is nothing to me. You—you can be everything," he replied with anything but a graceful effort at the courtier's compliment.

"We shall see," and she gave him her hand, which he kissed as though hungrily eating something delicious.

And as he went out of the door Vivian scrubbed the back of her hand against her dress; and after waiting until his footfalls had died away down the hall, said to me:

"I wouldn't be alone with that beast for—for—not even to have his head on a platter!"

I was too busy to answer, being engaged in artistically disconnecting the telephone so that von Hartmann would not be able to telephone before evening in case he did wish to reach Miss Valentine.

Then to the maid who had undoubtedly been listening I gave the price agreed upon

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and promised her that if she kept her lips sealed her mistress would never know what had happened.

"I do not care what she learns. I am leaving her next week, and this—" folding the bills and checking herself modestly when she had started to stoop to her stocking—"will help furnish the flat. I am to be married."

I wished her all the marital happiness in the world; and Vivian and I left, after taking some little precaution against being identified by any one who might chance to see and recognize me.

VIII

THE gray afternoon turned into a leaden evening and thence to an inky night. A chill drizzle sifted its way earthward, dampening and cold. I paced back and forth across the room as near to nervousness as I have ever been; and though I am not soft-hearted and squeamish and have done many things that it is not pleasant to think of, much less to tell, yet I had some trouble in holding myself to the resolve upon which I had determined.

It was the first time in a life of some turbulency that I had ever deliberately planned to kill any one. But I intended that von Hartmann should die. I assured myself again and again that if ever a man lived deserving of it in war, he was the one; and I went over and over the heart-sickening fashion in which the Government to which I gave the highest allegiance it is possible for one to give would take such spies as he and stow them comfortably away in detention camps for the duration of the war.

That courtesy, that misguided gallantry, I knew did much to encourage the activity of German spies; and by striking secretly yet effectively, and leaving such warning as must reach other spies, I hoped to do something that would—if not intimidate them—at least assure them that a fate other than the detention camp might swiftly overtake them.

I expected to face such odds in The Castle as would relieve my conscience of all reproach: such odds as would clear me—in my own judgment of myself—for I care nothing for the judgment of others—of the slightest taint of assassinating even a German spy. I have shot often in self-defense; and that I am able to write of those times indicates that I shot quickly and straight. I have faced situations, knowing that somebody was likely to be hurt before much time passed, but I never deliberately planned to kill a man. And that troubled me.

Not even Vivian knew the resolve that was in my head, nor did she suspect the odds I was planning to take on so that I would feel that I had at least given von Hartmann and his crew a fighting chance. Vivian thought that I was bringing up such reinforcements as George and Jerry and Rob to even the odds; and I was again reduced to the necessity of deceiving her. When I thought of the boys that go on their raids out across No Man's Land into the crowded trenches of the Huns, jesting with death and laughing at odds, I lost what pride I might otherwise have had in the encounter that I hoped for.

But I was actuated by motives as impersonal as theirs. Mine, too, I told myself over and over, was war-work. When von Hartmann was dead and his crew chased out, captured or dead, then the Secret Service could have possession of The Castle and what papers and evidence it contained. Perhaps my plan was not wise, but it appealed to me who had felt very keenly the kind consideration which spies, terrorists and all the enemy ilk met at the hands of the Government.

It was getting near the time for the curtain to rise on the little tragedy when George came in to tell something that had happened.

Henshaw and Eddy had come with the van for the boxes; and it appeared that Henshaw had hoped to persuade Eddy to join with him in an attempt to carry off the boxes for themselves and be rich. Evidently he had not confided—as Eddy had—with his master what he had learned regarding them; which perhaps accounted for the lack of energy shown in the effort to recover them. I had counted on Henshaw being at The Castle that evening. I had also counted on Gregory and Condon being present.

"Wot'er ——?" Eddy had demanded as he and Henshaw quarreled in front of the garage. "You said the Old Boy'd take me under his wing if I helped bring home the bacon, an' you want me to cut loose an double-cross 'im? Not much I won't—I won't. Old Man Gaboreau's turned me

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out in the col' col' worl', an' I need a home. Ain't you never told him 'bout me? You forty-nine kinds of a white-livered liar!

"These boxes go right to him, Johnny boy, an' I'll tell him about myself. Get me, Steven? I'll be the welcome baby boy, too—I got a little present for 'im already stowed away there. You asked me what it was, an' I said it was my dress-suit an' cigarets. Well, it's more'n that."

This, George said, referred to a long box some two or three feet high which had been in the truck when it came up.

The upshot of the quarrel, as near as George could gather, and Eddy had taken no pains to conceal his righteous wrath, seemed to be over the fact that Henshaw had promised Eddy to put him in right with von Hartmann if the boxes could be found; and now Henshaw was trying to persuade him to make off with them and be independent. Perhaps Eddy knew what they contained, and so was not to be tempted. I knew that they contained rags and rocks, for not trusting the word of Gaboreau, I had examined several of them selected at random.

I did not know what Eddy was up to by trying to win into the good graces of von Hartmann. I was, however, pretty sure that he was acting under the instructions and guidance of Gaboreau, but after this night Gaboreau would have to drop his war on von Hartmann. But I thought that Eddy might as well serve me in more ways than having Henshaw appear at The Castle. I had intended that Condon and Gregory should be brought and ushered in to confront the surprised von Hartmann and dumfounded Henshaw later in the evening.

Incidentally I may remark at this point that Leonore Musset probably wondered why on earth she had been overpowered and gagged in her room that afternoon, and left on the floor to watch the clock slowly creeping through the hours while a burly man, who would have answered to the name of Jerry, if she had known it, sat in a chair also watching the clock. And the gentleman who passed under the name of Campbell—and whom I had never seen—probably wondered how on earth a roll of counterfeit money came to be in his pocket when two plain-clothes men suddenly appeared at his door and searched him.

Perhaps he did not remember a little withered yellow-faced man having bumped into him at the apartment-house entrance; and certainly Mr. Campbell had no way of knowing that a woman's voice, over the telephone, had told the police just what they would find in his pocket. It is peculiar how much faith the police put in the tips that come from women who will not give their names, and who talk from public phones; but perhaps not so peculiar when one considers how often those tips are straight. That was why I had had Vivian phone instead of doing so myself.

Mr. Campbell would probably find the charge against him changed after The Castle had been searched by Federal officers some time on the morrow; and Miss Musset would descend from the splendors of a vampire-spy to the misery of a prisoner, for Jerry had instructions to leave her gagged and bound at seven o'clock; and to leave in a similar position any one else who called in the meantime at her apartment.

But Henshaw was due for a grilling, and I expected that to come from the outraged Gregory and the bullying Condon, in the presence of von Hartmann, whose little dinner was likely to be sadly interrupted.

I had heard enough to know that Eddy would be glad to do anything that would seem to bring him into favor with von Hartmann; and it took little more than a word from George to get him to enter heartily into the scheme, although he had not the faintest inkling that I had a thing to do with it. Eddy pretended that he had stolen the key to the basement, and asked Gregory and Condon if they would tell their chief of what he, Eddy, had done—put in a good word for him—if he would help them get away. They promised.

He then told them of the boxes and the "money" it contained, of how Henshaw was trying to steal it for himself; and they were eager to load the boxes on to the truck and Henshaw too and carry the whole load to von Hartmann. But, close as Gregory had been to the German spy chief, he did not know where to find him at once. Eddy told of The Castle.

The result was that as I watched from a dark window I saw the truck drive away with Henshaw a prisoner, Condon and Gregory and Eddy highly elated, and all that was left of the Kaiser's spy fund—that is, its original boxes—returning to von Hartmann.

Fifteen minutes later, driven by Jerry

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who had returned promptly and reported that none other had appeared to share the imprisonment with Miss Musset, Vivian, in a black long cloak and accompanied by another who also wore a black long cloak——and both were heavily veiled—set out for The Castle.

AS VIVIAN'S machine approached the entrance men could be seen hurriedly carrying boxes within the house from off a truck that stood at the door. She waited until the truck was emptied and had left before telling Jerry to drive up.

No one was in sight.

Jerry climbed down and banged on the knocker, and after delay he rapped again.

A servant opened the door slightly and inquired as to who was calling; and Vivian answered sharply that, if "Mr. Hartman" so soon forgot his engagements, the lady whom he had asked to dinner could see no further reason for playing the guest.

Vivian had scarcely started to speak before the servant, a man of goodly size and muscular build, with a slight thickness of the tongue that might have been due to learning English late in life, tried to interrupt her and apologize. He had not been able to see who was in the car when he opened the door—it was a closed car—but Mr. Hartman was expecting a guest and dinner was ready. Mr. Hartman was just then very much taken with some unexpected matters that had come up but he would be at leisure in a few minutes.

It was a closed and unlighted car. The footman, by the aid of the large globe over the arched doorway, undoubtedly could make out the two muffled forms, particularly when Vivian opened the door to speak with him. She did more than open the door. She raised her veil so that he could see her face and for a moment seemed about to step from the machine.

Then, apparently angry at Mr. Hartman's inattention, she withdrew herself. The footman volubly explained. Vivian closed the door as though about to drive away, but she did so merely to change positions with the other figure dressed like herself.

Then opening the door slightly, and speaking as though somewhat mollified, she said:

"Marcia, I sha'n't need you after all. I'll be home early, too."

The door opened wide and the footman tenderly helped me out of the car and up the steps, while Jerry and Vivian rolled around the corner a block or more away, to wait at an appointed spot where George and Rob were already stationed.

I had really expected that von Hartmann himself would be at the door; and our plan was for Vivian to find some pretext for seeming piqued and so explain the petulant silence between leaving the car and entering the hallway. I had really expected to throw off the disguise almost as soon as the door locked behind me. But this was not necessary at all.

The footman thought he had a piqued mistress in tow, and he was oh, so solicitous, but not a word could he get from me. Nor would I walk fast. Not much. I took very small steps, for I did not want my broad-toed number sevens to slip out from under the hem of the long velvet cloak.

As we went down the hallway we passed a room where there was a babel of loud voices. I wanted to pause to listen, but there was an urgent pressure at my elbow; however, through a door that stood ajar I could catch a glimpse of angry men huddled close. Boxes of a familiar size and appearance were also in a disorderly attempt at arrangement, in the room.

I was escorted into an automatic elevator and taken to a guest-room on the third floor, where the footman left me. He was no sooner out of sight than I was out of the room. I realized that such an excellent opportunity to explore the "battlements" of The Castle would not likely present itself again. Vivian and Jerry, reinforced by George and Rob, had been instructed not to become nervous before forty minutes, and not to take any action before an hour.

At the end of that time, I had whispered to George something serious would have happened to me if I did not return, and he could take whatever measures seemed necessary to find out about it.

I knew George was the sort of a person who, when he started to find out anything, would just about tear a hole in the earth digging up facts; and though The Castle was a hard place to get into, he could be depended on to carry an inquiry pretty far along.

The elevator ran up into the tower, a square-built, two-story tower, copied,

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apparently, from some medieval picture; but I used the stairs. I could observe things better.

I was anxious to find the wireless and I had some curiosity as to the explosives that were hidden there.

As I had not expected to do, I heard the splutter of the wireless before I reached the top. It was a muffled and repressed splutter, and not at all the sizzling crack-swack that splits the air when honest men are at work. I knew something of importance must be in the air for the wireless to be operated. I did not at first locate it, though I had the sound to help me and the roof was well lighted.

The roof was divided into compartments, four compartments with fairly wide passageways, but the compartments were without windows along the passageways. The wireless, I reasoned, must be in one of them, and the message that was coming must be unusual, for a permanent spy-wireless does not risk detection unless the business is imperative. It was the lack of windows that really made my inspection difficult.

As I rounded a corner I came upon a man locking a door.

He probably never knew what hit him.

Anyway, he went down without a sound, for after I struck I caught him so that he would not fall heavily, and turning the key in the lock opened the door, dragging him inside. I went through his pockets, searched, bound and gagged him.

I was in the compartment containing the explosives: large boxes, labeled as "condensed milk," "potted meats," "crackers."

I saw the curious contraption by the windows that opened out over the parapet: a winch, with a drum and cable, and large baskets for lowering and raising the explosives—in case the police were watching doorways—that were to be distributed around among the cargo of ships and in munition factories. I supposed that the winch was operated by the dynamo that ran the elevator.

The door into the compartment was of steel. Evidently built either as a protection against fire or to keep the police from breaking in until whoever happened to be inside had been lowered away by the cable. In a pinch that means of descending would do nicely.

I carefully laid aside my woman's hat and coat and went in search of the wireless. I located it, but a locked door stood between me and the inside. I scratched the door with my finger and made sure that it was not of steel: the wireless was not guarded as well as the explosives. It was no doubt locked to keep out any of the curious servants who might have been coming around to read messages or interrupt the operators.

I really don't know why it was locked. That is only a guess. But anyway it was, and I wanted it open. My loud rappings did no good; nor did the key which I had taken from the first victim fit the door.

MINUTES were precious. I looked about the roof. No one was in sight. So I put a gun to the lock and fired. The door gave way before my weight and I burst in upon two hooded, saucer-eyed figures that stood in amazement and terror. I closed the door with a kick of my heel, and by a gesture sent their arms above their heads, backed them against the wall and read the message one of them had been busily decoding. In a pinch I can read German, not so well as Vivian, but I could make out:

U209 lands funds Thursday night 2 to 3 Delancy.

This was Wednesday night.

I turned to the frightened operators.

"Delancy—where?"

No answer.

"Remember what happened to Belgians that wouldn't talk? You taught the world how to fix people like that. Just pretend that you are a Belgian."

"New Jersey," one of them said, trying to back through the wall in an effort to get farther from my gun.

The wireless hummed and cracked away.

I was trying to keep my eyes on the doorway and on them at the same time, for I was a little afraid that the shot might attract attention. Still, it could not have been heard by any one very far down the stairs, though it would have rang out rather loudly into the night and certainly have penetrated any of the other compartments. But I had to keep my eyes on those fellows rather closely, as I asked—

"Island?"

"Yes."

"Funds for?"

"The baron."

"The who? You mean von Hartmann?"

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"His Excellency the Baron Frederick William von Hartmann," the goggle-eyed one replied, bowing low as though to pay due homage to the title.

I was making short work of those fellows, instructing one in binding the other, when the door opened cautiously.

I jumped back and—well, I did not shoot, but I came so near to it that I almost felt like a murderer.

"Great Jehosephat! You! Say—whatchu know about that? Ain't no ghost? But you are dead! I don't b'lieve it—that you ain't a ghost. How'dju get up here?"

And Eddy, nursing a large Colt's revolver in one hand, pulled his ear with the other and rattled on as he looked at me unbelievingly.

"How did you get here?" I asked.

"Me? I said good-by to the bunch down there that's fussin' over which is the biggest liar, an' sneaked up to put this wireless on the kibosh. An' I find you—in what might be called a compromisin' situation. Embracin', so to speak, two Boches. An' you —— near shot me. I guess I pack a gun for an ornament. I don't seem able to train it to talk fast," and while he chattered he was busy kicking the wireless equipment into junk, then turned toward the German operators.

"Why don't you toss 'em over? Dirty, stinkin' spies. Tie 'em up? Sure. Here you specimens of Kultur——"

And Eddy proceeded swiftly to tie them up, and all the while he talked.

He said there wasn't a suspicion in anybody's mind that I was alive. Henshaw had told him of the poison placed in the water. But Gaboreau swore that he had seen me dead the night before that happened. And Gaboreau was playing a trick on The Castle.

"Take it from me, I b'lieve the Old Boy is goin' blow it up. I'd be dead certain if he hadn't told me to lay this wireless out for the junkman. That box, you know—the one I smuggled in with the million rocks and rags. Good joke on you, wasn't it? Me, too. But you can't put nothin' over on the Old Man. Nope. I don't know what the devil's in that box. Big as a small trunk. I tried to open it, but nothing doin'. I didn't try hard—just to see if it was locked. Savvy?

"The Old Man told me to be sure to have it on the truck, and I did. Nobody seemed to think about it. Too busy thinkin' about their own troubles. Say, somebody's goin' to have his throat cut before mornin'. Ought to hear 'em quarrel! I ducked. I'm one o' the gang now, you know. Oh, yes, I'm a Boche now. Ruthless—see—" and he kicked a chair as hard as he could.

Irrepressible and impudent, his presence somewhat made me ashamed of myself. Here I, who was conscious of being a patriot, and not unconscious of being a man of a certain amount of nerve, had prided myself on entering The Castle as a raider. I really thought that I was doing something uncommonly desperate. And this little gambler, freckled and perky, was jauntily prowling about, utterly unconscious of being brave about it, doing much the same work that I had come to do.

In a way I was glad to have reinforcements, but on the other hand I knew that he would carry to Gaboreau word that I was something more than a ghost.

"Where is Gaboreau?"

"—— if I know. He had me cook up that play with Henshaw—that Henshaw's an awful mutt—just to get that box into this house. Funny thing about that —— box. I got to get it out again, too. Inside o' twenty hours, he told me. Can you beat it? But smash the wireless, says the Old Boy."

"But these men—" I indicated the Germans we had tied. "They have heard. Twenty hours from now they'll have been found and told all you have said."

"Will they now?" Eddy asked, eying them in a comical sort of a way—comical if one did not notice the peculiarly sinister gleam that shot from between the lids.

"Won't they?"

"No. Nope. Just as soon as your back's turned I'll make 'em promise never to open their mouths again. You know, fellers with their throats cut always keep promises o' silence."

"I'm interested in the contents of that mysterious box. If I help get it out we'll take a look at the inside—and we'll do it tonight."

"Locked from the inside, I guess."

"An ax will open it."

"Yes," Eddy agreed. "And the Old Man would open my breast an' take out my heart to feed to his pet mice. Nope. When the cops grabbed me and framed me the Old Man stuck by me. He got me out.

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I've been in an' out o' trouble all my life, an' nobody but the Old Man never lied to me. I'll stick by 'im. The Old Man liked you, too."

"Yes—so I judged from the attention he gave me. But I have work to attend to. Tell me, are there many people in this house?"

"Not more'n a hundred. Maybe some less. No, I ain't jokin'. If your heart jumps like mine ever' time you hear a footstep, you'd think old said heart was in a hurdle race. I've counted ten different types o' noses and twenty o' each type. The house is full o' people. I know that."

"How does Gaboreau expect you, playing a lone hand, to get that box out again?"

"Leave it to the Old Man to tell a feller what to do. I don't do nothin'. The truck-driver shows up, sayin' we all must have carried in a box he had for another party. I am to say I do remember a box bein' in the truck when we started to load. See? Driver identifies the box and away it goes. Was you thinkin' about huntin' a little trouble around here, Mr. Everhard?"

"Were you thinking of hunting a nice quiet spot and avoiding trouble?"

"I was. Yes. But I'm awfully curious. If I think there's a-goin' 'o be trouble I stick around an' take a look. See? This top story is very quiet right now. Ain't much population up here. Germans hang out near the kitchen. Like their eats, Boches do."

Then I told him briefly how I had gained entrance to the house and that I wanted to meet von Hartmann.

"Skip around the corner and put on your rig. I'll take you down an' introduce you. He's down there listenin' to his agents quarrel—or was. Somebody goin' get hurt before that quarrel's over."

I went around the corner and resumed the wear of the black robe and veil and hat.

Eddy came up as I was giving a last touch to the arrangement.

"A fine-lookin' dame—but, my God, what feet! Set on 'em or somethin'."

His humor appeared a little forced. There was a kind of far-away, startled look in his eyes.

I suspected that something had happened in the wireless-room.

"I forgot something," I said, and started toward the wireless.

"Wait. I'll get it. What is it?"

He put himself directly in front of me.

"No. It won't take but a minute."

"Don't go," he said. "They didn't suffer none. Just a whiff of Prussic acid. If somebody'd 'a' found them, then it'd been us that went kerfluie. I think more o' myself than I do of any —— Hun spy."

WE TRIED the doors of the other compartments on the roof, but they were locked and no one seemed to be within. Time was passing too rapidly for me to waste more of it there.

We took the elevator down. Eddy knew the way about better than I. He said the basement was fixed up in a kind of servants' quarters that was really a barracks for the Huns.

"You know, these guys thought that when us Americans started taking a wallop at the Kaiser, all the Fritzes over here'd climb our backs. Civil war, you know. So the Huns got hold of big houses like this one, with lots o' ground around so the neighbors couldn't peek behind the blinds an' see nothin', filled full of bombs an' guns an' sent out word for all the Fritzes to rally 'round the seidel.

"Fritzes didn't rally worth a ——. Hard as it is for the Kaiser to b'lieve it, most all the Germans in this country wasn't joshin' when they took out naturalization papers. Right down here, Miss Cleministaub—right—whew!"

We had got out of the elevator while Eddy was talking, and as he saw a servant standing in the hall he spoke to me as though I were a woman; and, unthinkingly, had started to give me a French name—the first that came into his head—but—with what he thought was great presence of mind—he had turned it into a safe Teutonic sound before it left his mouth.

For a moment the hall was empty, but just as Eddy pointed out the door that led into von Hartmann's room, we heard the sound of voices—von Hartmann's and others—coming from behind.

"Quick—in here!" Eddy said, thrusting open the first door that his hand reached, and shoving me into a small closet-like space.

I heard him speak to von Hartmann. I could catch the sound of voices, but not the words; and the sounds no sooner died away than I realized that I had no business in the closet, hiding. I had not come to hide.

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I opened the door and stepped out. At the other end some one, evidently a servant, was passing; but he gave no attention to me.

I approached the door to von Hartmann's room. It was half open. I stood to one side and peered within.

It was a large room, a very large room, but, oddly enough, with no windows, expensively paneled in carved wood, and hung with broad canvases. Rows of book-shelves were across from the door through which I was peering, and near the center of the room was a large table. The floor was covered with boxes, and even a hurried glance at them distinguished the large, plain but solid-looking box which Gaboreau had smuggled into The Castle.

This box was near the middle of the room, but it was not so very conspicuous because other boxes were piled about it. Whether that arrangement was accidental or intentional, I do not know. Men who had as much to think about as von Hartmann and those with him were not likely to pay much attention to a box among a hundred, simply because it was somewhat larger—considerably larger, in fact.

The quarrel was on in full force, and von Hartmann was worried. His big, heavy face was bitten by worry, for the appeal was made to him as to a judge, and Henshaw and Gregory were clamoring, each for the blood of the other.

Gregory, flushed with rage, all the venom that he had distilled during the days and nights in my basement coming out, again and again related what had taken place in that basement and called upon Condon to bear witness. Condon, tough and bristling with injustice, swore—and literally swore, too—to everything that Gregory said and abused Henshaw for his own part.

Both Henshaw and Gregory had claimed Eddy as a witness the moment they saw him in the hallway, each asking where he had been and promising von Hartmann that his word would bear them out in their diametrically opposite claims.

They stood about the table, or rather three of them stood on the side nearest me, their backs toward the doorway and facing Henshaw who was alone on the other side of the table.

Henshaw could have seen me if his eyes had shifted from the faces of his accusers in my direction. I moved a little to one side so as not to be so conspicuous; and I stood there in an attitude of waiting rather than one of listening. I assumed that attitude of waiting for the benefit of those servants that were continually crossing the hall, for Eddy seemed to have spoken truthfully when he said the house was full of people; but I did not think that any would question me as long as I was not acting suspiciously.

Certainly they would hardly presume to question a "lady" who stood outside their master's door as though she had a right there. I knew very well that these servants did not interfere with the baronial whims of von Hartmann.

I had planned with some cunning to get Henshaw into the fix that he was in, and yet I could not but admire him. He had his back to the wall and he was fighting for his life. I had expected that he would break down and whimper. But he did not. He had played the game with me in a way that revealed no capabilities excepting those of the liar; and in fact he was still playing the game as a liar, but playing it well.

His thin, dark face was tense, his head erect. He had made them all go up to his room to inspect a diary that he had kept, and they had been returning from there when they came near overtaking Eddy and me in the hall.

Henshaw was insisting that he had been straight with von Hartmann from the first, and that he had poisoned me, that he had recovered the money and had not attempted to steal it, but only wished to test Eddy's honesty, and that Gregory and Condon had quit like dogs and allowed me to catch them, whereas he, Henshaw, had put up a fight and escaped.

Such statements nearly caused Gregory and Condon to explode. Knowing the last to be a lie, they suspected that the rest were lies, too. Had they known more of Henshaw's movements they could have picked flaws in his story; but not even with the help of Eddy could they disprove the charge that they had been captured by me at a time when Henshaw escaped.

"Jealous—they're jealous, sir!" Henshaw cried. "They flunked out and now they are trying to make me a traitor. You know what I have done. I killed that man Everhard. You know that. I let him catch me—take me to his room. He thought he would trap me by pretending

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that he was wounded. I suspected that it was a trap. I told you so. Remember? I walked into it—and gave him poison. Eddy here knows that. Don't you, Eddy?"

"You put somethin' in his water——"

"And Everhard was——"

Gregory loosed a string of terrific oaths and again related what had taken place in the basement, how I had praised Henshaw for services done to me, how I had given him, Gregory, a letter written by Henshaw which told his treachery.

"Lies!"

Gregory appealed to Eddy to tell how he had got them out of the basement, and appealed to him to say that Henshaw had tried to steal the money after it was located on my premises.

But Eddy was careful not to implicate himself too deeply.

"He may've been talkin' about a better way o' bringin' it here. An' maybe he was testin' me. I don't know."

Von Hartmann wiped his face from time to time and beat a fist into the palm of a hand.

"Henshaw," he began ominously, "I think——"

"May God strike me dead——"

THEN something happened. I could not see so very well because of the veil, but as I watched from the side of the door and looked between the heads of Condon and Gregory at the face of Henshaw, I had an impression of something thrown from one side—a flash it was. And just as Henshaw, in protesting his innocence, called upon God to strike him dead, his words were cut off, his hands went to his throat. He staggered back, screaming wildly, rocked to and fro and would have fallen had not Eddy caught him.

I forgot all discretion. I stepped inside the room and closed the door. For seconds my presence was unnoticed as the men grouped around Henshaw, and bending down, stared in mystified horror at the long splinter of bamboo lodged at the side of his throat, just under the jaw.

Death coming to a man when such words are on his lips is likely to put awe in the hearts of all who see and hear: particularly so mysterious a death. None of those who stood by the table had done that, and as I stepped inside the door, no one else was to be seen. Nor did there seem to be any place where one could hide.

It was some seconds before those who bent over Henshaw realized what had happened. Then as they straightened up their eyes found me.

"You—who—" Gregory began.

Von Hartmann, at the sight of me, had his memory touched. He had evidently forgotten all about the dinner.

He glared at me for a moment as though trying to associate my presence with the body on the floor; then, as though thinking it impossible that a light woman caught up for an hour's dalliance could have had any part in such work, and angry at her intrusion, he shouted:

"Get out, you slut! Get out of the house!"

I made no move. I said nothing. And something seemed to convey to them that it was hardly an insulted daughter of joy who stood there, black-robed and sinister.

"Who are you?" von Hartmann asked, the bullying tone somewhat gone from his voice.

The hat and veil came off as the cloak dropped down around my feet. My hands slid into my pockets—very heavy pockets they were—and if the eyes of those who watched had been keener they might have noticed that the pockets concealed rather long, rigid objects.

"The devil!" Condon blurted.

"You!" from Gregory.

Von Hartmann glared from me to them inquiringly: his amazement was almost inarticulate. But he was no fool. He saw in a flash that he had been taken in, and how.

"Who is it?" he asked, returning his eyes to me.

"Everhard!" Condon and Gregory and Eddy answered at once; but there seemed a note of exultation in Eddy's higher-pitched voice, and I had the impression, though I could not take my gaze from von Hartmann to see, that Eddy's hand slipped down into the waistband of his trousers where he—and other artful men—carried his revolver.

Something of a silence fell on the room. I was face to face with the man I had come upon to exact the full penalty of his espionage and terrorism. But my mission was easier to plan than to execute. I can not shoot an unarmed man, no matter how much he deserves to be shot. War is war, of course; but war presupposes an enemy in arms, and

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you risk your life against him as Mars casts forth the iron dice. This would have been murder.

A complete revulsion of feeling, a weakness if you choose to call it so, came over me. In vain I thought of the *Lusitania*, of the factories and munition trains blown up, of the innocents killed by the agency of this man, but I could not bring myself to the slight pressure of the forefinger which would have then and there eased the country of the terrorist chief.

I was again caught in that same weakness that had made me let Gaboreau continue to live: I am incapable of murder. And I wished, as I have seldom wished for anything, for the presence of Federal officers into whose hands I could deliver him and the evidence throughout the house. But it was hopeless to expect to get all of those men out of that house without arousing the ubiquitous servants.

I spoke in a low voice, but my words were distinct enough. In a way I was really talking against time. Up to the very moment that I confronted him I had expected to shoot von Hartmann down like a dog. But I could not do it. Nor did I intend to let him go. And I did not see how I was to get him out of the house. So I suggested that everybody keep cool and attempt nothing rash; then I asked, indicating Henshaw—

"How was he killed?"

"Didn't you do it?" von Hartmann answered.

"No. How could I? That splinter pierced the side of his neck. I was in the doorway. Stand over there, one of you, and you will see how impossible it would have been."

All of those men, excepting Eddy, were convinced that I had done it; and yet they could see that there was something to what I had said. No one made a move to pass around the table until von Hartmann with a gesture and a grunt told Condon to move around.

He walked around the table, and von Hartmann looked at me, noting my position, then turned toward Condon—and even as he turned a sliver of bamboo lodged in Condon's neck!

A guttural exclamation of surprise that was closely akin to terror escaped von Hartmann's throat; and his eyes, drawn wide in fright, swept the room. Nothing was to be seen that could account for this unerring, and seemingly disembodied agency of death. It was uncanny. More than uncanny, it was fearful.

Many if not most men can, with a degree of poise, face the greatest of dangers, even death itself, when they loom before their eyes; but few, or none, can with courage meet the invisible, the mysterious, the imperceptible: just as men who charge, cheering, into a rain of bullets, scatter and flee in panic at the outbreak of a plague.

Every man in the room was shaken. They stood away from the table, looking this way and that, as men in the Middle Ages must have peered apprehensively into the shadows after finding cloven hoof-prints on the road.

I was not unaffected myself. The thing that really alarmed me most was the honesty of von Hartmann's terror. It was not some contraption of his own that was throwing those poisoned barbs into the throats of those who took a certain position in the room—and that position was directly beside his own large chair at which he sat when he worked. I am always suspicious of paneling: it often disguises a death-trap, but no trap of the kind could well be fixed without his, or some of his servants, having become aware of it.

Decidedly the situation was baffling, uncomfortable. It savored of the fiendish ingenuity of but one man that I have ever known—Gaboreau.

But Gaboreau, crippled, could not have climbed into that house. He had used his cunning to get Eddy into it—and that box! What of it?

I turned my eyes toward it, and in that unguarded moment the full weight of von Hartmann was catapulted upon me, both arms pinning mine and his weight bearing me to the floor. I shot again and again, but he had caught me from the side and the bullets went wild.

Von Hartmann was a huge, powerful man, and I was held in an awkward position. I am no weakling, but I was handicapped. I caught a glimpse of Eddy drawing his gun and heard him cry something—then Gregory leaped, knocking up the gun and clinching.

There was shouting and clattering. It seemed to me that at once the house was in a terrific uproar. Von Hartmann, grasping my hair, was pounding my head terribly

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against the floor, and I struggled against unconsciousness; but everything seemed suddenly gone topsyturvy. People were bursting into the room and shouting, and faintly, as though from far away, I heard cries of alarm that seemed to indicate something besides the fight in that room.

Von Hartmann roared furiously in German. I caught the words:

"Burn the house—don't let the police in! Kill this swine!"

A terrific kick—and all was blank.

I WAS unconscious for only a matter of seconds; but when I came to I wondered how many hours it had been and where I was, for pandemonium was loose. Too, it seemed that the house had fallen in and the weight of it was on my chest. I stirred dizzily. Something was suffocating me by the weight. I put out my hand and touched a body. I twisted and writhed until I moved from under it, then sucked in a full breath and became conscious of the odor of smoke.

Shouting and pounding, mingled with the tramping and moving, seemed to fill the house. My head ached and I was still dizzy, but I sat up.

"*Mon Dieu!* More lives than a cat! Many more!"

That voice was near and shrill and familiar. Every nerve in my body grew taut as steel threads drawn to the snapping-point. I turned my head and looked squarely into the grinning face of Gaboreau.

There he sat in the box, the long box, the lid thrown back, and in his hands he held a stick that looked like a flute. Vulture-faced and bald-headed, his thin lips and toothless gums drawn tight in a kind of smile, his sharp eyes bright and gleaming, he sat and looked at me; and I looked at him. A strange meeting, indeed. And outside of the room the tramping and shouting went on.

It has been only during this war that the world at large, the reading world, has learned how long a second may be, and how interminable are minutes. It takes chapters to describe raids, the daring, splendid raids that the boys of the Allies make in the trenches of the Germans; yet seldom are those raids of longer duration than three or four minutes. And during the next fifteen or twenty minutes things happened in that house with the swift intensity of a raid.

"What has happened?" I asked, feeling very weak, but clutching at my strength and trying to draw out the reserve.

"Von Hartmann has escaped. The house is on fire. We're bound for hell together. I got in here in this box with my blowpipe. When they were out of the room for a minute, I changed the box so as to get my loophole to face his chair. When I heard that fellow boast he had poisoned you, I shot him—handy thing, blowpipes. Then I shot the other one. Von Hartmann ran from the room, telling one of his butchers to kill you. I threw up the lid and shot him. That's his body there.

"They got Eddy. He's dead—but he shot that other fellow first. He's dead, too. You and I are left. The police are raiding the place. Von Hartmann is firing it to destroy the evidence. He probably has a secret way out. You go, Everhard. You have good legs. You may get out. Jump from the window. You ought to have shot him when you had the chance. You think too much of other people's lives. I'd have killed you a dozen times if our places had been changed. But now—see—" and he broke the blowpipe over the edge of the box. "Our fight's over. If you stay here you'll be roasted. Get out. Get out!"

Excitable as ever, he screamed at me. Lunatic, too, in the crucial hour he flared up in a gallantry that befitted the one-time colonel of chasseurs. A fiend among criminals, heartless in his crimes, thinking no more of killing men than of mashing flies, yet by breaking that blowpipe he had deliberately thrown away the one sure chance of putting an end to me, though he had tried, in his maniacal, incomprehensible way, a dozen times to kill me.

He sat in that box, padded and lined with red plush—a box seemingly too small to accommodate even a small man—like some satanic creature of another world on a throne. Satanic he was; but there is something of the archangel in Satan. And there was a strange dignity—a fiendish dignity, perhaps, but nevertheless a dignity—about him as he sat there cursing me for not getting to my feet and dashing from the room.

Physicians, speaking a language that it is not always easy for laymen to comprehend, tell of how, under pressure of intense excitement, of danger, men come by a force seemingly miraculous, and say that at such moments within the body there is an

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increased secretion of adrenin always present as the phenomena of increased physical exertion; that adrenin heightens the blood pressure and heart-beat, exhilarates the muscles until men may easily do such things as would be unthinkable, impossible, without fear or anger or the excitation of danger.

I arose, stood for a moment rather unsteadily, took a step forward, stopped, then my brain seemed to clear miraculously; all feeling of dizziness left, and I ran to the door, flinging it open and stepped into the hallway.

Before the door that opened into the street a sheet of flame was roaring. I dashed open another door to reach a window. Before the window, too, another sheet of flame scarcely more than bounding the window was burning fiercely. I found another window, and there, too, the fierce flame. The house was on fire in a score of different places, and yet the house was not burning.

With Teutonic foresight and ingenuity, preparations had been made to defeat utterly the efforts of the police when they should attempt to enter. The heavy doors were not only barred, the windows not only shuttered with steel, but before each some terribly inflammable substance had been arranged so that, at the touch of a match, it would burn fiercely and defy the entrance of police or firemen until those within the house had had time to make what disposition they pleased of their papers and documents and to betake themselves to some security that had been provided for.

Eventually the fire would eat into the interior of the house and reduce it to charred ruins; but that would probably take some time, for the stone house would not readily burn.

That devilish scheme for keeping at bay the police was remarkably effective in keeping within the fiery prison such as happened to be caught and did not know the secret way of exit. How well the fire-traps had been arranged was evident by the fact that the elevator-shaft, a natural draft for every fire, was not burning.

It was only when I was searching for windows that I realized there were none in the room where I had come on von Hartmann.

I heard voices at times, but I saw no one. Every one seemed to have left the floor.

I remembered the winch and cable on the roof, and slipped my hand into my pocket and felt the key of the compartment; but, I reasoned, this entire household could not hope to escape that way. There must be another exit: perhaps one in the basement, a subterranean passage. Yet, if there was such a passage, it would be crowded and I had no way of finding it.

I dashed into another room: a dining-room, the table set with silver and linen. Von Hartmann's dinner for his light o' love! I snatched up a carafe and drank in the lurid flare of the fire that burned from three windows of that room. The same German mind that had devised the fire-brand—a perforated iron bulb, filled with abestos cloth that absorbed gasoline—used to burn the cities of Belgium had perhaps supplied von Hartmann with the equipment to make a furnace of his doors and windows without immediately setting the house itself in flames.

I did not think the house would really burn. There was little to burn. The walls were stone. But the flames were roaring with the intensity of flames that are drunk on petrol, and outside there was the rattle and crash of voices and wagons and pounding. Inside the house I could hear the orders and cries of men.

THEN suddenly the air was filled with a terrific roar, and the house shook as though teetering from an earthquake. At first I thought the tower had been blown up; but I realized that as loud as had been the explosion and much as the house shook, it could not have been that: not one stone would be left standing on another if the tower should be touched off. Too, while the roar had been near and violent, it had the *pop* that only comes when a charge is touched off underground.

I had no time to stand wondering. Seconds were precious. My only way out was from the tower and down the cable.

I tore the broad white cloth from the table, tumbling the service to the floor, and rushing again into the hall confronted the frightened-faced footman who had so solicitously shown me into the house. A gun went into his face:

"The way out—quick—tell me!"

He snatched at the gun, frightened out of his head. There was not enough courage in him to have made that leap deliberately. I brought the gun down on his head,

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thinking to knock him backward and then get an honest answer; but he fell, unconscious. I had no time to waste in bringing him to. I must—other passages being denied—gain the roof.

Back into the library I went.

Gaboreau sat in his red-plush box, as I had left him, his eyes curiously bright and alert. But there was no fear on his face. If he had made other men die in his maniacal ruthlessness, he himself was not afraid of death. One of those absurd fantasies that often come to men in stressed moments flashed through my brain. It seemed that fire was his element, and, like a salamander or a devil, he had no cause for fear; for certainly he sat there in a kind of satanic glory, watchful, expectant, unafraid.

He scolded and cursed and, lunatic that he was, at first tried to struggle. But I could not leave him. I really do not know why, except that I perhaps felt that after all he had been a friend; certainly in the last fifteen minutes he had saved me from the man von Hartmann had left to kill me. But perhaps chiefest of all was the reason that he was not a coward.

Anyway, I unceremoniously tumbled him into the table-cloth after I had folded it much as a mother folds a diaper, and tied him on my back. He was not heavy. Had he been full man's weight I doubt if I would then have noticed. But I did notice, as one of his thin arms was thrust out in front of my face, that he held a dagger!

"Drop it!" I said.

He laughed crazily.

But there was no time for argument. I was really not afraid that he would use it, though for a second it gave me an uncomfortable sensation. I suppose, though, that if he had dropped the dagger he would have pulled a viper, or a bomb, or something deadly from some other pocket. There was something akin to sorcery in his ability to summon up instruments of death.

As I said, there was no time for argument. Something alarming was going on in the hallway. It had been empty but a moment before, and now it was full of frantic men. I say full, though perhaps there were not more than ten or twelve, and they were surging up from the stairs behind the elevator as though fleeing from terror, and screaming wildly. I thought of rats in a trap. They were like that.

Apparently they were caught in their own trap. Too frightened to see or notice, they were fighting with one another on the stairs and at the elevator-door; some were running, as I had done, to find a window not guarded by petrol flames. But these men had done their work too well.

Most of them seemed intent on waiting for the elevator; and the slow-going automatic, not to be hurried by men's danger, seemed interminably dawdling in the shaft. Some of the men, impatient, started up the stairs.

It was not easy to decide what to do. I was not only overwhelmingly outnumbered, but handicapped, too, by the man on my back. I had no wish to climb those long stairs and be caught probably between two fires when half-way to the roof. I could not imagine what terror had driven them back from the exit they had expected to use. I could not jostle with them for a place in the elevator.

As the elevator came down and the door drew back, I shouted—

"Hands up!"

I might as well have called to stampeding cattle. The two or three that heard were only the more madly terrified. In a body, seven or eight tumbled into the elevator. Some one within pressed the starting-button; a man desperately struggling to get in jumped at the rising floor, scrambled a moment and was scraped off at the top of the grilled door, and fell—striking the landing, then tumbled down the shaft.

"Shoot them! Shoot!" Gaboreau screamed in my ear.

The elevator-door had slowly run across and latched itself again.

I jumped to it, beat out the glass with a gun, reached in and threw up the latch, opened the door, and, leaning down, I fired again and again and again below into the motor.

A convulsive wrench of the cables, a jerk of the elevator, and movement ceased. As I had hoped: it was stalled between floors. It had started to fall when the dynamo was hit, but the safety had caught and held it, and the men within were imprisoned.

Nothing was left but to climb the stairs: but at least those whom I would meet at the top would be fewer in number than otherwise.

IN THINKING it over afterward, I can see that I might have done many other things than I did. The house was three stories high, five counting the two floors of the large upreared turret.

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All of the windows on the ground and second stories had been fired; but it is possible that by finding one on the third and calling down for help I could have had a net spread by the firemen or perhaps a ladder run up. But the night was inky black, and the fire was all within the house. Only a red glare showed where the windows were.

It was perhaps the strangest fire ever seen in a burning house. It would have taken time to attract the attention of firemen, and any minute the house might become within a raging furnace from basement to roof. My mind was set on the cable and baskets—as the minds of every one else in the house seemed to be, too. I knew that was one way out. I had the key to the iron-doored compartment, and I felt that even against odds I could fight my way to it.

And another and very important thing to my mind, no matter how trivial and unimportant it may seem to others, was the fact that I would take almost any chances to get away without being questioned by the police.

But one thing I had not counted on was the fact that the elevator had made a trip upward before I came the last time into the hall and saw the frantic men waiting for it to descend. As I was to learn, there were more people on the roof than I had expected to find. But at that, all who had passed up before me were not there. Many were at the windows on the third floor crying for help, eager to be caught if they could only be saved. However, there was not much reason to care for the odds because—

Well, I was just about half-way up the first flight, and feeling rather winded by my haste and the burden on my back, which did not seem so light as at first, when I heard the clatter of feet behind me. I wheeled—and two bulky forms rounded the turn, and both were puffing, the faces of both were blackened, and one was bloody. But I recognized George and Jerry.

"Thank God!" Jerry cried. "It's him!"

"This is ——!" said George, for one of the few times in his life making a direct statement of fact.

There was no time for congratulations.

"Back the way you came," I said. "We must get out that way."

"Can't do it," Jerry explained, talking fast.

But I may as well tell here, not only what he said, but some things that I learned afterward which explain better than he did at the time how he and George chanced to come and arrived so opportunely.

They had waited around the block until the time set had come and gone; and they, as well as Vivian, grew nervous. But not having an inclination to call in the police, they had begun to try to find out what was happening or had happened in the house. They tried the front door and no one answered, though they saw some one peer out at them. They tried a back door, and it was opened cautiously and an inquiry made as to who they were and what they wanted.

Thinking to run a bluff, being very sure that those within would be easily frightened, Jerry declared that they were Secret Service men and were going to search that house if——

But Jerry had been permitted to get no further.

Some one who had been listening within the room cried out to some one else. The door was slammed. Instantly there were shouting and crying within, and a general tumult. This rather amazed George and Jerry; and they were more amazed to see and hear almost at once heavy shutters swinging across the windows, and the red glare of fire leaping within rooms before all of the windows had been shuttered.

For a few minutes they did not know what to do; then thinking that possibly some one might be found in the garage who could—if "persuaded"—get them into the house, they rushed out there. Presently they heard the clatter of fire-engines. And while they were looking from the garage door—the garage sat back almost a half of a block from the house—at the forms silhouetted against the glare of engines and moving under the street lights, two men dashed from within the garage and passed them.

George and Jerry shouted at these men, but at once another came by. They turned inside to find out from where these men were coming, and met two more emerging from a stairs. These yelled excitedly and turned back. George and Jerry unhesitatingly plunged down after them. There seemed a mob in the passageway; but it would take more than a mob to stop that intrepid pair. There were blows and shots and yells—then an explosion that shook the earth.

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Some excited fool had probably touched off the mine under the garage, planted there to blow up all evidence of an entrance into the house. But George and Jerry were far enough under the passageway to be saved, and only stunned. Excepting two or three others who had been stunned, all fled. George and Jerry came after them, shooting as they came. That accounted for the terror with which I had seen the gang come back.

My friends were outdistanced, because they had blundered about in the basement for a time before discovering the stairs that led up to the hallway above.

One could probably hide for a time in the passageway, but the exit was closed by the wrecked garage and there would be the danger of smothering in a passage with no ventilation and a fire overhead.

"Then it's up to the roof!" I said.

Jerry swung Gaboreau on to his back, remarking:

"Old top, this ain't the first time I've been your nursemaid!"

Gaboreau did not seem to hear. He cackled, thinking of something else, and screamed in glee:

"You two hoodlums scared von Hartmann into burning his house! That's German efficiency for you! The fire-traps were all set, so at the first alarm they had to be lighted! Bah!"

Then up those stairs we went, turning, endlessly turning and climbing. Overhead we could hear the shrieks and cries of the men trapped in the stalled elevator, cries horrid with fear and panic, and my conscience troubled me. I suggested that we stop to try to get them out, but Gaboreau scolded scornfully, and Jerry and George objected. There was no time to be lost: we could not, they said, save them or ourselves either if we stopped. The chances were, Gaboreau shrieked, that nobody would be saved anyway. He did not seem to care.

AS WE passed the stalled elevator the men were pounding on the iron cage and fighting among themselves. Some noticed us, and redoubled their screaming; and others, one or two who were armed, began shooting—not because we were enemies, for they had no way of really knowing that, but because we stood a chance of escaping and they did not. That is the Hun of it! A bullet caught Jerry in the shoulder, and he turned with leveled gun—but did not fire. It was too much like murder.

"Come on," George cried and started to run.

Jerry swore and stumbled. Gaboreau was on his back. Jerry dropped his gun to catch himself with his unwounded arm, and the gun clattered down the stairs. He hesitated whether to run back for it, but Gaboreau urged him on. George was too far ahead to see what had happened. I picked Gaboreau off Jerry's back and carried him. We pressed on.

As we entered the turret and reached the last flight of stairs, a man, running madly, started down past us. George caught him, lifted him high and threw him clear over my head and on to the floor. From the open door above us I could hear excited voices calling for an ax. Perhaps George's victim had started to find one.

George was the first to burst out on to the roof, and he went out shooting, asking no questions, no quarter: smashing forward against all he saw. Men cried out. Some fled. Some dropped. Some struck back. The passageways were not wide. We needed to clear the way to reach the compartment door. The *mêlée* was short and fierce.

Other men came, some armed. I shot past George at one who had poked only an arm and his eyes around a corner and was pumping lead toward us. He vanished backward as though jerked by a noose. George brought down his emptied gun on a head that rammed his stomach. One of my automatics was empty: it had blazed the right of way straight across the roof. Something shoved me roughly to one side, and Jerry, one arm useless, the fist of the other hand knotted, flung himself abreast of George.

The compartments made the two passageways on the roof intersect at right angles. We won to the corner and they came at us from the two sides which had afforded shelter from the line of fire.

A shrill cry from Gaboreau. I looked up. A man on top of the compartment that had concealed the wireless was aiming down at George: an upward thrust of my hand, the pressure of a finger and he toppled off into the night.

"They got me!" Jerry sobbed as he went down.

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But they were far from having him. On his back he threshed out with his feet, planting blows on shins and stomachs.

Jammed in, crowded and outnumbered, we fought on. My back to the wall, and Gaboreau on my shoulders—I could not feel his weight then—I shot right and left with what coolness I could summon, picking the dangerous men, easing George of his handicap. George was the hero of that fight on the roof, a sheer hundred feet from the ground. His fists smashed into faces; his fingers gripped throats and flung backward the half-strangled bodies; his knees rose into bellies as they crowded on to him. Those who fought against him fought not so much with courage as with desperation.

I steadied myself for a careful aim, when something twisted my shoulders and dropped from me. I fired, missed and turned to see. Gaboreau had reached out so far to bury his dagger into the back of one that rushed at my unguarded side that he had toppled off. The dagger had gone true.

Below, far down on the ground, the pounding and cries and orders of men: police and firemen and the crowd that always gathers, all mystified and wondering at the yells and shots above, at the seething furnace that was only beginning to lift flames to the night, at the explosion that had shaken the earth.

And on the roof I became aware of a voice booming above cries and blows. The men were giving away, breaking away and fleeing down the stairs. Bluffed and beaten they were, but not all of them even gone. George, shot, knifed and bruised, silent except for powerful breathing, pressed on as those before him broke back. My own face was swollen: a fist had caught the cheek and rocked my head, but the man who did it had fallen, and lay quiet.

Then out burst the booming voice, and out came the great body of von Hartmann —leaping from the doorway of the wireless room, and against George. I pulled down. No aim was ever truer: but the hammer struck on a shell-less chamber. I had been cool enough to keep count, but had forgotten the shots I fired from my pocket when von Hartmann sprang upon me in his library.

To grips he and George came as when bulls lock horns. I flung myself forward, but tripped over the body at my feet and fell flat. A man, seeing the way between him and the stairs cleared, raced across—stepping on me as he went.

Gaboreau had seen. He laughed as a demon laughs at the futile flight of a soul from hell's pit: the dagger, whirling from his hand, caught in the back the man who ran from the fight. But he ran on, vanished down the stairs, the dagger in him as a pin is in a cushion.

I suddenly realized, as I stood up again, that I was near to fainting. I was dazed and reeled, and caught myself groping unsteadily. Some of the blows that had come upon me must have been harder than I knew. I tried to shake off the haze that seemed to surround my head. My eyes must remain clear, my hand steady. It was hard. But a man can stay on his feet a long time after he feels that the next moment he must drop. I stayed on my feet, though the effort in itself was like the strain of combat. I leaned against the compartment wall and every nerve and muscle in my body gave of its strength to keep my eyes open.

"Now I can forget Sedan!" Gaboreau screamed, flinging his hands upward in a kind of diabolic exultation.

George and von Hartmann were locked motionless as statues carved in combat; their great bodies pressed together, the German's arms about George's waist and straining as a gorilla strains to break a gripped one's back. But his teeth were not set in George's shoulder as a gorilla's would have been, for both of George's fists were about the throat, pressing down as an iron band shrinks in cooling.

Seconds after the German's grip broke and he clutched the hands at his throat—raised a knee to strike—then, swift as the eye could follow, George shifted his position, stooped, caught the German at the side, knee and neck. A pause. Again George shifted, stooped, and straining like Atlas picking the world to his shoulders, slowly, slowly at first, he raised, then upward thrust the body of heavier weight than his own until it was lifted high above his head.

He took a tottering step forward, another, then leaning forward—let go. Von Hartmann screamed and clutched at air: from the parapet he fell, down, down to the feet of the watchers below. The flames had burst from the north side, and being free were leaping sky-high.

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THERE is not a great deal more to tell. The flames were rising on the north side, but the south as yet was sealed and except for the white-hot iron shutters over the windows gave no light.

I opened the iron door of the compartment where the windlass and the coil of cable were, and George and I made fast one of the large baskets to lower away Jerry and Gaboreau first. But the electric windlass would not work. The drum could be turned by hand, but when I wrecked the elevator-dynamo I had probably put out of commission the mechanism that ran the windlass.

There is, however, always some way to overcome every difficulty. As the compartment opened on the south side, we stood a chance, a meager chance, of getting down without attracting much attention. All of the crowd was on the side where the flames blazed. The firemen must have been at the front, or rear, for they were not working on this side as we could see. Only the north side had broken out. Anyway there was nothing else to do but to try it.

If the flames ever reached the tower where all that explosive was stored that end of the city would be, if not wrecked, at least a little shattered; and if we did not get away before then we would all be landed so near heaven that St. Peter might make the mistake of thinking we had come on our rightful wings. And while that might possibly be a consummation devoutly to be wished eventually, none of us was quite ready for it.

Jerry was protestingly settled in the basket. He wanted me to go first. But I did not have an arm shattered and a hole in my chest. Gaboreau, too, would be useless in paying out the cable; so both of them were put into the one basket.

Gaboreau took it calmly—for him. That is, he was eager and quite joyful. He chattered incessantly, inconsequentially, reminding that he had always said that he and I, if we worked together, could beat the world and that tonight had proved it. He praised George to his face, and George uncomfortably wiped away perspiration and stood nervous as a girl being complimented in public.

Certainly everything was topsyturvy: here we were assisting our inveterate and dreaded enemy to escape. But Gaboreau had himself made a good fight. He had done things that placed me under obligations to him as much as him to me. But even at that we could not be friends, as long as he kept to his own mode of work. I did not mention that, or such things. It was not the time nor place.

He and Jerry were settled, and we started to let out the cable. The safety-clutch allowed the basket to be lowered at will, and I tried to follow the basket down with my eye as George operated the drum. I could not keep it in sight, except when it crossed a white-hot window—the windows on the south had evidently been the last lighted.

Presently the basket settled and the cable became slack. We waited long enough for them to have got out, then undertook to wind the drum by hand. But it stuck. The cable could be paid out, but not drawn up. It looked as though we were marooned in the turret with enough explosive to have taken Verdun. We might yet have to try that imposition on St. Peter.

There was only one way out and that was down the cable. But one's hands would be burned off in attempting to slide, and I knew very well that I was lacking strength enough to go down hand under hand. Besides, the cable was covered with graphite and was slippery. But it was go down or be burned and blown up. Not that the blowing up would actually make much difference after the burning, but it certainly made the fate more unpleasant in contemplation.

George clasped his hands about the cable and gripped it testingly.

"Grease'd be worse. I think I can do it."

I did not know of what he was talking, and he would not tell me at first. He found a short piece of rope and tested it. Then he said he knew that he could climb up that cable hand over hand, and much more easily go down. He insisted that I tie the rope under my arms, and he would fasten the other end around his waist, leaving about ten feet between us. I was to take a heavy piece of cloth to keep my hands from being burned and get on the cable first, and he would climb down above me.

If I slipped, he was confident that he could hold me. He did have a grip like a vise. He was not to carry my weight, but only to keep me from going too fast. I had doubts as to his being able to do that, for he had been battered and cut, and there

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was a bullet wound in the fleshy part of his leg. But some men's bodies, no matter how badly knocked to pieces they are, have to obey the unyielding spirit; and besides, George was only to act as a sort of safety to keep me from sliding too fast.

It was the only way out, and down we went. I was uncomfortable all the way, and I held to that cable so tightly that I could scarcely unbend my fingers. We passed two windows that were white-hot on the way down, and it was like hanging before the mouth of a furnace: the sweat sprang from every pore. I tried my best to keep my weight from tugging at George, but a hundred feet is a long distance down a steel cable, and two or three times I involuntarily put so much pressure on the rope between us that I almost trembled for fear I would break his grip.

But he held. And some people have wondered why I was, and am, so attached to that impassive ox of a man whose record and finger-prints are in the Central Office! Incidentally, if the police knew me as well as they know George, or I had had the same unlucky fate in being caught, my record and finger-prints would be there, too!

I must have stretched out my toes expectantly twenty feet before they came to earth. I thought they never would get down to solid ground; and at last, with both feet firmly planted on the good old earth, I took my cramped fingers from the cable and heaved such a sigh as men do when a nightmare is shattered and they awaken comfortably in bed.

"Awright, old cock! You're under 'rrest!"

A heavy hand tapped my shoulder and the many "r's," long drawn and rolled, told me, though in the darkness I could not see the face, that an Irish cop had taken me under his wing.

I once read of a man who had gone all over the world having the most wonderful of hairbreadth escapes, and growing tired at last, he returned home and stumbled, breaking his neck on a rotten board of his front porch. I felt at the moment as that man must have felt in his dying moments. To go through all that, then have the heavy hand of a policeman clapped on my shoulder!

"Yez, too!" said the officer, reaching up to catch hold of George. "Four o' yez I've bagged this night! Good wor-r-k, me boy! Ye divils, thinkin' yez'd be gittin'——"

But the copper's congratulations were cut short. George came down—in a lump. He fell on that policeman as a sack of sand might have fallen; and there was neither a murmur nor wiggle out of him for some time to come.

It had happened so unexpectedly that for a moment I did not know what had happened; and only fully realized when George said—

"If you will just untie your end of this rope, Mr. Everhard, we'll leave it around the feet and hands of this officer as a memento!"

I untied it, as a voice called low from the darkness:

"Good work, old boy. Two of 'em was on the watch here, an' grabbed us! I've bracelets on me."

It was Jerry, speaking from the shadows. The officers, evidently stationed to watch on that side, had caught Jerry and Gaboreau and put handcuffs on them.

"Bracelets?" George asked.

Then he began to remove the coat of the policeman. It was a tight fit, but George got into it. Quickly he stripped the policeman of his trousers, too, and leaving him scantily clad, put on the helmet.

"Really it is hard to pass as a policeman without the shoes," George said grimly, in his peculiar way, "but——"

"God, he's gone!"

Thus Jerry announced that Gaboreau had disappeared. His handcuffs were found lying where he had been lying, but Gaboreau himself was not to be found. We searched hurriedly and called discreetly, but no answer. It had been, evidently, no trick for his thin, frail hands to slip from handcuffs; and he had silently crawled off into the night. As ever, mysterious, indomitable, setting about the impossible, Gaboreau had ventured to escape from us, though he must have known that I would not have tried to detain him.

But he was gone. Crippled, handicapped as he was, yet he had ability to do the inconceivable. Had I been more superstitious, I would have thought him in league with the devil. There was more wizardry about him than about many who have been burned as sorcerers. How he escaped I do not know.

But I have a suspicion. Jerry said that there had been two cops. We encountered but one. The other was nowhere to be

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seen, and had disappeared even as Gaboreau. Gaboreau had his agents everywhere: he was the most feared man I ever knew. The only tenable explanation I can conceive of is that the other policeman either knew who Gaboreau was and served him for fear of vengeance or else was tempted by a possible bribe.

We did not have either the time or the light to search, so it may have been that the policeman was an honest man who stopped to hear something that Gaboreau wanted to say and had his throat cut; and that Gaboreau then crawled away. There was no telling how or why that incomprehensible and terrible creature did anything. Certainly he was gone!

FLAMES were beginning to burst fiercely from the south side, too, and we were in haste to be away. With the light came the knowledge that a fire line had been drawn about that side, too, and the rope some fifty yards away was patrolled by guards, although the crowd was almost entirely on the other side. But George's ready wit and courage got us safely through.

George, holding me by the arm, and supporting Jerry on the other side, pretended to hurry us along as though we were under arrest. And poor Jerry wore handcuffs when an arm was shattered and he was almost doubled over by a throbbing wound in his chest.

George ran his bluff well, cursing the curious out of our way, and assuming the officious manner of a policeman who has made valued arrests. He commandeered the first suitable car that we came to, and there were many to choose from, and ordered the man who sat at the wheel to drive around the block.

We came to Vivian's limousine that had been in the appointed place all that time. But neither she nor Rob were to be seen.

"All right, you can go," George said to the man who had brought us. "This is the inspector's car. I'll keep 'em here."

And the man drove off, thinking he had been of service to the cause of law and order.

I had not dared to say anything for fear of arousing the suspicions of the stranger, but as soon as he was gone I made it clear to George that he owed it to himself and to Jerry to get to medical aid at once. But he was, I thought, sullenly obdurate. There were no cars at this place but our own and few people, except those that hurried past to the fire. I had been trying to examine Jerry's wound in the chest, when I happened to glance at George. He had fainted! I jumped on to the seat and started for home.

And arriving home I called two doctors, one of them Dr. Roberts. Our house certainly did begin to resemble a hospital! Mrs. Kelly, tearful-eyed but uncomplaining, camped by Jerry's bedside as the nurse; and while warning him that he ought not to talk and ought to rest, continually questioned him as to details of what had happened and softly, proudly, caressed his hands and face.

Dr. Roberts said that George was suffering more from exhaustion than from wounds; for, miraculously, considering what he had been through and the number of times he had been struck, there was not a serious cut or hole in his body. I might have known that. No man could have stood up as he did with a really bad wound. No man other than himself could have stood up as he did anyway.

Black Mike, when he heard from Bessie, who had listened, something of what had happened, got up out of bed, came to George—told the doctor to go to —— when the doctor said, "Back to bed with you," —and begged for details while cursing his own hard luck in having been let out.

"But she's been a day I'll remember," Mike said happily to me, as an arm slipped around Bessie. "We've planned it all out t'night. My old man's got a little candy-joint, an' he's gettin' old. Al'ays wanted me t' take up bus'ness. Me an' Bessie—yes, sir, that's it. Just soon as I'm able to trot over t' the justice o' peace, which the same 'll be tomorrow mornin'. But criminy, how I wisht I'd been on that roof!"

Then Vivian and Rob came home; and Vivian's tear-laden eyes opened as with a cry of joy as she sprang into my arms and spoke incoherent words, kissing my bruised face, and wrapping her slender arms again and again around my neck.

"Oh, Don, Don, I thought you were dead, sure!"

"And that the machine had been stolen!" Rob shot in irreverently.

"They got into the house and brought out men—oh, lots and lots of them—and I heard there were dead bodies all over the house!"

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"Yes," Rob added, "wasn't nothing much to burn, seemed like. Funny fire. Looked like the house was burning up inside and nothing coming out of the windows or doors. Stone house, and I heard one fellow say the fire never even reached the elevator-shaft. But that explosion. Must have killed a lot. How on earth did you get out?"

"I overheard one of the policemen say the roof was a shambles and that they found tons of explosives," Vivian added in a fearful voice.

"Believe me, those fire-boys did some great work. Cut a hole in the wall and went in with chemicals. Oh say, old uncle, I guess I might as well tell you the news. I told Vivian while we were waiting. Jeanne and I were married at the hospital this afternoon! I thought I'd keep it secret for a while—didn't want it to interfere with my getting into the Aviation Service. But I'm not going any of that exemption stuff—after what my wife has gone through from those devils in France! You get busy and pull wires, will you, old uncle of mine?"

That came near taking my breath even though I had known for a long time that it was coming. And yet I was not sorry. Each man chooses his own wife and I liked Jeanne Latour. She would probably never know just what those words she had gasped into my ears that night had brought about. But I had no regrets.

I and her uncle and my friends had carried the war into the German citadel in America, and I thought it would probably be a good long while before the Kaiser could reorganize his force in this country. And then I thought of something.

Vivian was whispering tenderly, coaxingly:

"Don, you'll never get into more trouble, will you? We will go away—South America — Australia — some place — be tourists——"

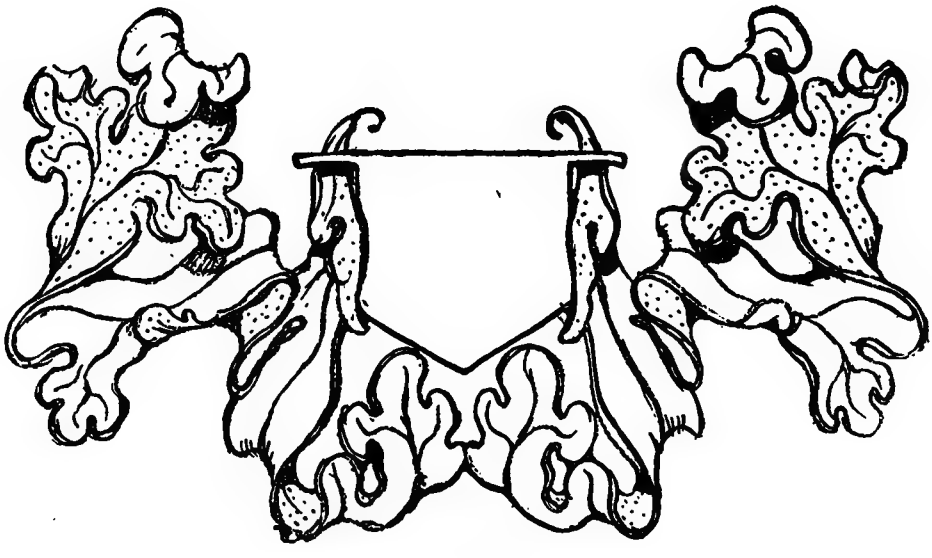
I slipped my hand into my coat pocket, fumbled a bit and drew out a piece of paper. I handed it to Vivian. She read:

U209 lands funds Thursday night 2 to 3 Delancy

"What does that mean?" she asked quickly, with foreboding.

"My dear, it means that I am going to make a little trip right away to Delancy Island, New Jersey. Von Hartmann can't possibly have any use for the money—the wireless is wrecked on The Castle so the U-boat can't possibly be warned of what had happened—and the Red Cross will be able to do much more effective work if we can keep the Kaiser on its list as a contributor and after that—well, then, dear, maybe we will go to Australia or some place and—be tourists!

THE END



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SAGES IN SAGELAND

By W. C. Tuttle

Author of "Pie for Magpie," "Alias Whispering White," etc.

THE mining law of Montana says that you got to do a hundred dollars' worth of work on each mining-claim every year or keep your mouth shut if somebody jumps it.

Me and Magpie are a whole lot like the feller in the "Arkansaw Traveler," in the respect that we don't have to do our assessment work during the Summer, and mostly always in the Winter it's too blasted cold for anybody to jump a claim.

Last Winter there's several claims jumped, so it's up to me to break a trail for my burro and pilgrim out to comply with the law. My pardner, Magpie Simpkins, is the sheriff o' Yaller Rock County, and is too busy to assist me, except financially. I've been gone ten days, and you can believe me that ten dollars per day is small remuneration when you have to perform in twenty-below weather.

I drops the plunder off my burro, hazes him into the barn, and ambles for the cabin. I ain't been warmed plumb through since I left, and I has visions of a warm seat by the fire. I stands on the step, while I kicks the ice and snow off my boots, when I hears a voice inside:

"Dang your hide, Violet! Ain't you never going to act decent? Get your danged nose out of my face! You do that again and I'll kick all your ribs loose!"

"Magpie's voice!" I gasps. "My pardner is mistreating a lady!"

"Get off my feet!" he whoops. "I'm going to teach you how to act if I has to tie your two ends together and use you for a merry-go-round!"

Not even Magpie Simpkins can mistreat a lady thataway while Ike Harper is around, so I kicks the door open, and dashes inside. That door hits something, and something hits me.

Did you ever get kicked by a cow? It don't hit you high but it sure does hit you handsome. I got mine just below the knee, and I lands on my chin over by the bunk. I gets up, sort of dazed like, and rubs my knee.

"Violet, meet Ike," says Magpie. "Ike, this is Violet."

Magpie nods toward this rangy cow critter and then toward me. I rubs my shin-bone some more and nods to 'em both.

"Much obliged to meet you, Violet," says I. "You sure do shake hands energetic-like."

Then I turns to Magpie:

"Don't you think the beef is a bit rare? I like mine cooked."

He's got two ropes on Violet, both fastened to the foot-posts of his bunk, and he puts on a couple of extra hitches before he replies:

"When I promised to teach this cow to be an actress, Ike, I sure accepted some chore. She ain't got to be nothing but house-broke and patient, and she won't try to be neither."

"Which ain't nothing serious against the cow," says I. "Any time you tries to make a Sarah Bernhardt out of a critter whose natural tendencies turns to raising veal, exuding milk and starving to death in hard Winters, you've accepted some job.

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Whyfor make a stable out of our home, Magpie? That cow is more in need of hay than elocution."

"Ike, what day is tomorow?" he asks.

I consults the calendar and announces the twenty-fourth of December.

"The day before Christmas, Ike," says he, with a grin. "Now do you sabe the use for the cow?"

"Barbecue," says I. "That's the stuff, Magpie. But why didn't you pick a young cow with meat on her frame?"

"Barbecue, ——!" he snorts. "Do you know who Miss Clarice Connolly is?"

"Never having heard the name before, Magpie, I has to admit ignorance. I'll bite."

"Miss Clarice is the niece of Wick Smith, and is our new school-teacher."

"That accounts for the cow," says I. "You're going to train her to carry the teacher's books."

Magpie rolls a cigaret, and glares at me like I'd done him a grievous wrong. After he fogs a little while, he sets down on the bunk and explains things:

"Ike, do you remember enough of the Bible to remember the part where Christmas gets its start as a holiday?"

"Go ahead. I ain't that ignorant, Magpie."

"Me and 'Cobalt' Williams and 'Slim' Hawkins are wise men."

"I know all three of you. Go on, Magpie."

"Living picture, Ike. You see, when Mrs. Wilkerson took sick and had to quit teaching, Wick Smith, being a trustee, lands the job for his niece. She's progressive and lovely to a startling degree, and when she opines to celebrate Christmas she's got some willing helpers.

"Last night we holds our last meeting, and everything is fixed up great. We're going to have a Christmas tree and a Sandy Claws. Sabe? We're going to have old man Thatcher's orchestra, and then to top off the whole bill we're going to have this here tableau. This danged cow has got to be house-broke by that time, Ike. From what Miss Clarice tells me this is a solemn sort of a picture, and has got to be done right. The cow is part of the picture. Just us three wise folks and one cow. Sabe?"

"Have you wise hombres got any more to do than the cow, Magpie?"

"We ain't telling nothing. It's going to be a humdinger of a show and that's enough for anybody to know. I'll bet that hall will be packed to the guards, Ike. Pete Gonyer and Art Miller have been working for a week on that chimbley for Sandy Claws to come down."

"What's tickets worth?"

"Gratis, Ike. Free gratis. Peace on earth is all we seeks. Ordinary towns can have Christmas tree and such things, but this here layout will put us on a plane by ourselves. Too bad you wasn't here to get in on it, Ike."

"All of which causes me to celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas together. Do I have to sleep in the same room with Violet?"

"Ain't you got no public spirit, Ike?" he asks. "Ain't you?"

"I ain't blaming the cow, Magpie," I replies. "Why didn't you stretch a cowhide over a frame, and make believe it's a cow?"

"No chance. We don't want no fakes, Ike."

"How about you wise men?" I asks, and goes out of the door before he has a chance to give me his usual soft answer.

I heard it hit the door behind me.

I WANDERS down-town, and in front of Wick Smith's store I finds Cobalt Williams, Slim Hawkins and a young lady.

"Miss Connolly, I admires to make you used to Uncle Ike," says Cobalt, bowing low. "Uncle Ike is one of our old landmarks."

Cobalt is a year younger than I am, and Slim two years older.

"Awfully pleased to meet you," says she. "If you are uncle to these gentlemen you surely hold your age well."

"Yes'm," says I. "Also my temper. Mr. Williams' little sister and I were playmates, and the first pair of long pants I ever wore belonged to Mister Hawkins—that's why they're so familiar in their talk."

"I surely wish you had been here a week ago," says she. "I would have chosen you for my tableau."

"I'd have made a good one," I agrees. "With my knowledge I could have handled the situation without the use of live stock. I hope you'll do well, ma'am."

"There might be some popcorn on the

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tree for you, Ike," grins Cobalt. "Your teeth still allows you to eat popcorn, don't they?"

"You going to take a chance on having a tree in there?" I asks, and they all three nods.

"You dang well know we are!" says Slim. "Biggest one we could get into the hall."

"Then you don't show much wisdom in private life," says I. "You sure lack judgment when you bring in anything with limbs on, 'cause somebody might—I ain't saying they will—but somebody might bring in a rope. Pleased to have met you, ma'am."

I goes over to Buck's place and insures my system against rattlesnakes.

"Going to hang up your sock?" asks Buck, grinning. "I ain't seen so much Christmas cheer since I was a kid back in Indyana. She's going to be a moose of a entertainment, if you asks me."

"Buck," says I, "this here peace on earth may be hy-iu to hear, but the party what adopts it as a motto never takes Piperock into consideration. Me—I'm coming to this here blowout meek and lowly, and ready to be amazed and entertained, but notwithstanding all that, I'm going to file the trigger-catch off my gun so I can fan the hammer."

I buys me a present from Buck, and pilgrims home again. Magpie is gone but Violet is still there. I speaks pleasantly to her and mixes me a hot drink. The fire don't burn very good, so one hot drink needs company. After a while I begins to think I've been imposed upon.

"It ain't fair," says I to me. "Magpie ain't giving me and Lodestone a fair shake. Why bring a strange cow in the house, while my poor little old burro shivers out there in the barn?"

I sobs a few verses, puts on my coat, and brings Lodestone inside.

I love the front end of that burro, and has to tolerate his other end. Back as far as his shoulders he's as pious an animal as you'd ever meet, but beyond that dead-line he's a sinner of the most malignant type.

"Lodestone, meet Violet," says I. "Violet is to be an actress."

I cheers myself up a little more, and then rolls up in a blanket. I must have went to sleep, 'cause when I wakes up it's dark and cold. I'm just about to get up, when I hears voices outside and the door opens.

"Violet catches on to things right smart," states Magpie.

Then Slim Hawkins cuts in:

"You bet she's smart. Leave it to little Slimmie to pick 'em out, eh, Cobalt?"

"That's a fac'," agrees Cobalt. "All my cows got brains. Are we going to rehearsh in the dark?"

"Hang on to yourselves," advises Magpie, stumbling around in the dark. "Where's that blamed lamp gone? Oh, here you are."

"Here's cow," states Cobalt. "Nice little ol' cowie."

"You're drunk!" snorts Magpie. "Cow's over in this corner."

"Naw, she ain't," chuckles Cobalt. "Feel her, Slim? Right here—feel?"

"Sure is," agrees Slim, laughing. "Magpie forgot where he put Violet, Cobalt. Good joke on Magpie, eh?"

"Is that so?" asks Magpie, sarcastic-like, trying to light the lamp, and smashing the chimney.

He gets it lit, but the draft from the door makes her splutter, as he weaves over to Cobalt and Slim.

Crash!

Some of the kerosene spews plumb over on to me.

"*Bah-r-r-r-rl*" bawls Violet, and little Ikey Harper begins to go away from there.

At the head of my bunk is a sliding window, which proved a friend in need. I goes right up to Buck's place, where a poker game is in progress, and nobody notices that I ain't got no hat on. Pretty soon there's a vacant chair and I horns into the game.

I've been playing a few minutes when Slim and Magpie show up. They walks, unsteady-like, up to the bar, and has a drink. Magpie limps a little, and Slim seems to favor his kidney area. They both look shop-worn and tired.

Pretty soon Magpie sees me and tells Slim, who nods, and they both moves around behind me. It seems to make me nervous.

Pretty soon Magpie opines in a soft voice.

"Too bad we had to kill that burro, Slim. I feel sorry for Ike, 'cause he was sort of attached to it, but you never can have peace on earth with a kicker like that around. A man ought to at least tie an animal like that up if he admires to keep it in the house."

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"Ain't it true?" agrees Slim. "I hates to see anybody kill a dumb animal, but that sure was self-defense, Magpie."

I lays down my cards, and turns around.

"Magpie Simpkins, did you do harm to Lodestone?" I asks.

"Killed him," nods Slim. "Shot him absolutely dead, Ike. It was a case of——"

Slim ceases his explanation, as Cobalt weaves in the door, and leans against the bar, where he wipes the tears out of his eyes, and sobs:

"Gug-gug-gosh! That was rotten shooting! Dang the luck! Who—who fired that shot? Missed—abs'lutely!"

"Missed?" gasps Slim. "You're crazy, Cobalt! Magpie killed it."

"Uh-huh," gurgles Cobalt. "Killed cow!"

"Cow?" gasps Magpie.

"Yash—cow!" snaps Cobalt. "Violet is casualty—abs'lutely. That jassack kicked me seventeen times before Violet died, and three times afterward. I feel that I got plumbago in my back."

"That's good," says I. "Somebody sure would have got leaded if that burro suffered harm."

They pilgrims right back up to the cabin, and about half an hour later Magpie comes in, sort of disconsolate-like, and nods. When I leaves the game I offers to buy some cheer, which he accepts.

"Killed her, all right," he admits. "I never knowed a cow to kick thataway, Ike. I got all I could stand so I throws a little lead. Now we ain't got no cow—blast the luck! Cabin looks like a cyclone had lived there."

"Lots of cows," I replies. "Range is full of them, Magpie, and I reckon one cow is as good an actress as another. Might tie some horns on Lodestone."

"I'd applaud if you said dynamite, Ike. Let's go home to bed. Three wise men learned some things this evening."

"Don't try to get a patent on it, Magpie. You ain't the first wise man to learn wisdom from a fool mule."

COBALT comes up the next morning and talks things over with Magpie, ignoring me entirely.

"Too late to get another one of my cows," states Cobalt. "The only thing available is that long-horned pinto steer what hangs around Wick Smith's place. The one that Wick calls 'Checkers'."

"That hungry-looking thing?" wails Magpie. "That animal's loco! He'd eat the hair off his brother's back."

"We ain't got to board him," informs Cobalt. "All that will show is his face, and he looks like a cow in the face, Magpie."

"If that's all you want," says I, "why not have two of you fellers in the picture and the other one play cow?" I asks, and just saves my life again by the thickness of the door.

I feels that I been run out of my own home, and nobody can blame a man for seeking light, warmth and cheer in a grog-shop in a case like that.

I'm only in there a few minutes when "Mighty" Jones comes in. Mighty is some character. In the Winter he lays around and does a little trapping, but in the Summer he can't trap, so he omits that part and follers out his Winter program as near as possible.

"Merry Christmas," greets Buck.

"With certain reservations," says Mighty, brushing the corn dew off his mustache. "Merry Christmas is all right, but when a feller tussles for seventeen miles to bring a present to a lady, and then have the committee refuse to hang it on the tree the joy of giving subsides. Slim Hawkins and Pete Gonyer tries to point out to me that she'd appreciate smaller favors. Maybe I better go catch her a chipmunk."

"What did your gift consist of, Mighty?" I asks.

"Not so much right now, Ike, but early next Spring he'd be a yearling grizzly."

"Not gaudy but useful, also ornamental," agrees Buck.

"Tame, too," states Mighty. "Tame enough. Lots of will-power. Took me twenty-four hours to drag him seventeen miles. You can't haul a bear like you can a sled. In the first place he ain't got no runners, and his natural tendencies causes him to want to go where you don't."

Just then "Dirty Shirt" ambles inside. He looks foolish-like at us, and makes a grab at the bottle.

"It's going to be an early Spring," he states, prophetic-like. "A bear chased me across the street."

"My gosh!" explodes Mighty. "Is that bear loose?"

Dirty sets the bottle back, and stares at Mighty.

"Well, if he ain't he's tied with a danged

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long rope, Mighty. He chased me about a hundred yards, and nothing seemed to hamper his stride."

Mighty turns up the collar of his coat, and goes out of the door complaining. I goes back to the cabin, and finds Magpie getting dinner.

"Get a cow?" I asks, and he nods.

"Kind of a one. We're going to use that pinto steer, Checkers. I hope he don't make a move. He ain't exactly what we want, but he'll do."

"Did you hear what Mighty brought for the teacher?" I asks.

"Uh-huh. About as useful as what 'Scenery' Sims brought."

"Scenery going to make her a present, Magpie?"

"He ain't going to make it—he bought it. Sent down to Silver Bend and bought her a pair of purple woolskin chaps. Pete Gonyer is making her a branding-iron—Double C."

"Has she got any stock?"

"Nope. Not even a bronc to try out them chaps on."

"WHEN in Locoland do as the Locoes do," says I to myself, that afternoon.

Buck has been retailing a new drink, which he named after two prominent section foremen, and after sampling same I gets romantic inside, and talks to myself:

"Seems like everybody is trying to make a little present to the new teacher, and Ike Harper is about the only one what ain't anteed. What good is a pair of chaps and a branding-iron if you ain't got no stock? Me and Magpie have got four head of stock in the hills, but a burro in the barn is worth a dozen broncs in the hills, so I'll just sign over all rights and title to little old Lodestone."

I got to figure out some way to make it a surprise. They won't let me tie him on the tree. Sudden-like I sees José, a greaser, come out of Wick Smith's store, and I yells to him to stop.

"José," says I, "you want to earn a dollar?"

"*Sí, señor*," says he, grinning all over his face.

"I'm glad you can see. You sabe my yaller burro?"

"*Sí*."

"Tonight is big doings in the Mint Hall, José. Sabe? You get that burro tonight after dark and bring him down in front of the hall. You wait at the door, and when you see Miss Connolly—you sabe the new teacher? That's good. When she shows up on the platform you lead that burro down the center of the room, and I'll be there to do the rest. Sabe?"

"*Sí, señor*. You can trus' José."

"To the extent that I pays you after you've done it. Don't tell nobody. Sabe?"

I meets Slim, and he's glad to see me.

"You're just the man I been looking for, Ike," says he. "Come over to the hall and help me hang."

"Slim," says I, "you speak of pleasure. Got a strong rope?"

"Presents—you danged fool! I got to decorate that tree, and I need your help. Sabe?"

"Slim, you raise my hopes and then dash them to earth. I'm too morose to be of any help."

And then I goes over and joins Dirty Shirt. Later on in the day me and him forms a reception committee of two to welcome folks. I reckon that everybody within a thirty-mile circle comes to Piperock, and me and Dirty makes welcome speeches until we can't whisper.

Along about seven o'clock we hears Thatcher's orchestra tuning up, so we goes over to the hall.

IT SURE is filling up fast. The stage is built across one end of the room, about five feet from the level of the floor, and is about thirty feet long by twenty feet deep.

On one end is built a fireplace, which reaches plumb to the ceiling. It is about three feet square, with an opening about four by three at the bottom. On the other end of the stage is a big fir-tree, covered with miner's candles and packages. The candles are smoking a lot, which don't improve the atmosphere.

They got a wire strung plumb across the main part of the stage, and a canvas curtain cuts off the view. Right in front of the stage sets Thatcher's orchestra.

Me and Dirty Shirt gets front seats, and Dirty has to set beside "Sourdough" Watson, from Mica. There's an old feud between them two.

Way back in the dark ages they disputes over what killed "Horsehair" Hartley.

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Horsehair decides to quit this here vale of tears. He decides that life is troublesome, and hankers to see what he's got coming to him.

He swallers a bottle of coyote poison and then shoots himself with a .44. Dirty orates that the poison done the job, but Sourdough holds that he still is animated enough to finish with a gun. Not being able to reach a popular agreement they feels badly toward each other ever since.

Old Judge Steele sets there on one end of the platform, and eases the snarls out of his whiskers with his fingers, while the place fills up. Then he gets up and advances to the front.

"Feller countrymen," says he, sticking his left hand inside his vest, like Napoleon Bonaparte, "we are gathered together here for a common cause. Peace on earth is our motto. There is some persons in this vast assemblage what are mighty near packing the limit of good cheer under their belts, and I asks you to curb your natural tendencies to yell at things.

"We aim to show you something that you never seen before and likely won't never see again, and I asks you—keep your guns where they belong. As the poet so feelingly said: 'Ring out wild bells through moonlight bright, for curfew shall not ring tonight.' Our first selection will be a number by the orchestra."

That sure was some selection. When a bull-fiddle, a banjo and a squeeze organ pleads, "Come to Me, Sweet Marie," you can feel that something is yet to come.

"If that's a fair sample I wish I'd stayed to home," I hears Sourdough complain.

"Anybody what don't know the difference between the effects of a .44 and strychnine wouldn't sabe a good show," replies Dirty Shirt. "I reckon the town of Mica gained as much as we lost when you came up here."

"Our next offering will be a recitation by Scenery Sims," announces the judge, and I hears somebody cock a gun.

The judge heard it, too, 'cause he bounces right back to the center of the stage.

"Who cocked that gun?" he yelps.

Nobody pleads guilty, so the judge holds his gun in his hand, and stands back of his chair. Scenery Sims slips out of his chair and ambles up to the stage. As much as I hates that measly little hombre, with the fine-comb voice, I can't help feeling sorry for him. I has a hunch that before—long before—he finishes his recitation somebody will kill him.

Sudden-like there's a scuffle next to me, and Dirty hands me a gun.

"Keep this, will you, Ike?"

And then he whispers out loud to Sourdough:

"What do you think you're trying to do? You ain't got no right to kill a man what ain't getting paid for speaking. You can have your gun after the show is over. Sabe?"

Scenery stands there on the edge of the stage, with his hat in his hand and a frog in his throat. He bows from his collarbone on up, about three times, and starts to mumble—

"It was the night be-before Christmas when——"

"*Moo-o-o-o-orh!*"

It drownded out Scenery Sims' squeaky voice, and filled the hall full of sound. It was the voice of a steer critter with something on his mind. Just that one bawl, and then silence.

Scenery glances, scared-like, behind him, bows three more times with his head, and begins again—

"It was the night before——"

"*Moo-o-o-o-orh!*" It comes again, and Scenery is coppered.

"Maybe it ain't etiquette, and I may be wrong in my prognostications, but, by the horns on the moon, I want to hear what Scenery's got to say!" yowls "Half Mile," weaving down the aisle, and stopping beside the orchestra.

He's got a gun in each hand and his natural timidity in public seems to have been blunted.

"Go on, Scenery," he orders, facing the crowd. "I'm going to beef the next person what bawls like a bull."

"It ain't them, Half Mile," squeaks Scenery, pointing behind him. "It's back in there."

As Half Mile turns the curtain opens and out steps an apparition. It's got yards of cotton whiskers on its face, and is garbed in a robe made of gunnysacks. It ain't got on no boots or socks, and as it comes padding across the stage on bare feet, a hole opens in them whiskers and Magpie's voice howls:

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"Go back and set down! You uneducated cross between a pelican and a prairie-dog! This is an entertainment—not a honkatonk!"

"I—I begs your pardon, grandpaw," says Half Mile, and then he pilgrims back to his seat, and Magpie goes behind the curtain.

"This ain't going to be so danged awful bad after all," says Sourdough. "I feels that I'd enjoy myself if I had a desirable place to set."

Scenery is standing there all this time, with his lips moving, and when the noise dies down we hears him say—

"Merry Christmas to all and to all a good-night."

Then he gives another one of them collar-bone bows, and goes back to his seat.

The judge gets up and pilgrims to the front again.

"Our next selection will be appreciated," he states. "Miss Clarice Connolly, who is teaching our young to sign their names instead of making a mark, will now sing for our edification, 'Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes.' "

"Huh!" snorts Sourdough. "That's sure one —— of a way to drink!"

"If some of you snake-hunters from Mica would use more eye-wash and less in your stummick you'd have a fairer city," replies Dirty Shirt. "If you don't like this entertainment, Sourdough Watson, the door is ajar. Sabe? One more yelp out of you and sorrow is knocking at your teepee."

The judge steps back of the curtain for a minute and then comes out again.

"I'm sorry to inform you that Miss Connolly won't be able to render her song," he announces. "She knows the song, but the orchestra ain't got the music and couldn't play it if they did. They plays by feeling—not by sight. In place of the song the orchestra will render 'The Star-Spangled Banner.' "

"Is it absolutely necessary, Judge?" inquires Half Mile, standing up in the aisle.

"N-no, I don't reckon so, Half Mile. It just fills up the time."

"Time ain't nothing to that orchestra, Judge, and I got too much respect for our flag. Let's see the rest of the show."

"ORCHESTRA overruled," admits the judge. "I wants to call your especial attention to the next number. This here tableau is something new, novel and also wonderful to look upon. I asks all law-abiding citizens to cooperate with me in keeping things absolutely quiet while the curtain is up. Now, everybody set tight. Let her go!"

Swish goes the curtain, and this is what we saw: three of them cotton-whiskered gents, dressed in sacks, with their backs toward us, are humped over like they'd been eating cucumbers, which posture pulls their sacks up until we can see five bare skinny legs to the knee, the sixth being clothed in red flannel underclothes.

One of them fellers is holding up one of Holt's silver milk-pitchers, and beside him is a strong box, with the name, "Wells-Fargo & Company," painted on the side. That pinto steer is there, too. He's got his head through a square built of two-by-fours, his body being behind the curtain, and as the curtain goes up he eases forward a little, stretches his neck a lot, and gets his lips around one of them sack suits.

He immediate and soon begins to masticate, and the wearer of the sacks begins to skid toward the animal. His appetite is too much for the wearer, who gets excited and takes a wallop at the pinto's head. Checkers lets loose and stares around.

Clang! Clang!

Two cow-bells drops out of the chimney and rolls out on the stage.

"Gee cripes, and the cow's got loose!" yelps Sourdough, standing on his seat.

"Cow-bells in the chimbley! Ye-e-e-e-e-ow!"

R-r-r-r-rip! Crash!

Sourdough's chair flips from under him and he lands on the floor on his neck.

"Have a desirable seat!" snaps Dirty Shirt, shaking the chair loose from his ankle.

The three fellers on the stage turns around, and just then comes a ripping, tearing sound from inside the chimney, and Sandy Claws is in our midst. He hits the bottom on his neck and turns plumb over out on to the stage.

His whiskers are sticking straight up over one ear, and one pant leg is gone. In spite of his disguise I recognizes "Tellurium" Woods. He sets there for a minute and looks us over and then explodes:

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"Gol-danged bunglers! The jasper what made that two-by-four perch for me used a piece of timber with a knot plumb through it, and she busted!"

Tellurium's coat is of a red hue, the same of which seems to aggravate Checkers to the extent that he ignores his two-by-four manger, and immediate and soon Sandy Claws is doing a matadore act.

Two of the sack-wearing gents are hanging on to the steer, trying with voice and action to make him desist, but that pinto steer has a mind of his own. The other gent was the wisest of the three. He picks up that treasure-box, and seems to crown that steer with it, which shuts off the animal's vision.

"Stop it! Stop it!" shrieks a female voice, and Miss Connolly comes through part of that wrecked curtain.

She must have been some excited, 'cause she grabs Checkers by the tail just as he decides to leave, and she don't let loose until she's in the air over the orchestra.

I reckon she sat down on the accordion, 'cause no female could ever cut loose the wail that comes up from there. Checkers hits the floor and stops. He's still got that box on his head, and now one leg is through old man Thatcher's bull-fiddle.

He stands there shaking his head from side to side, like he was ticking off the seconds until he's ready to go some more.

Just as I discovers that I'm standing on Sourdough's shoulder, I hears a commotion, and a soft voice warbles in my ear—

"Your burro, señor," and I turns to greet José and Lodestone. "The lady appear, so I come in. Am I not reliable, señor?"

I hears somebody yell at the back of the room, and I looks just in time to see Half Mile Smith turn over in the air backward, and as he turns his six-shooter explodes into the ceiling, and down the aisle comes Mighty Jones, sliding on his stummick, and his motive power is furnished by a half-grown grizzly.

The bear seems to have a place to go, and the ambition to get there on time. Lodestone is in the way but that don't bother the bear. Said bear just lets out a delighted sort of a wail, climbs over the burro and heads into the steer.

Lodestone's feelings seem to have been hurt, 'cause he swaps ends, and both feet hits that Wells-Fargo box like pile-drivers. Sandy Claws is wandering around the stage, sort of dazed-like, and that box hit him on the shins.

"Yip-p-p-pee!" whoops Sourdough, who has come back to earth. "This is some show!"

He starts to run around behind the steer, where he'll be safe, but his feet gets tangled in the neck of that fiddle, and the next thing he knows he's setting with his back against the stage, with both of the steer's hind feet in his lap.

The steer's vision clears once more, and he sizes things up.

"*Bar-r-r-r-rup!*" says he, deep down in his chest, pulling back his chin, and taking aim down the middle aisle, which is sort of squeegeed by this time.

"Now, gol ram you, I'll bet you stop!" whoops Mighty, dancing a jig on the stage.

He's got his rope around the Christmas tree, and the bear seems to be sort of snubbed. There's about six feet of rope from the edge of the stage to the bear's neck, and said bear is hauling back until his carcass stretches several inches.

"So-o-oh!" bawls Magpie, casting his robe in the steer's face, and standing there in front of it, with nothing on but his red flannel underclothes. "So-o-oh! You speckled son of a horned toad!"

With that robe over its horns the steer sort of starts sideways, and he plows right under that bear-rope, the same of which hooks over the steer's shoulders, and raises the bear off the floor.

I seen Lodestone kick a gun out of Half Mile's hand, the bear and steer seems to give that tree a mighty wrench, and down she sways toward me. I gets a glimpse of Sandy Claws, as the tree comes nearer, and I mentally makes a note that Sandy Claws has been roosting in the tree, and that he's due to hit me square.

Then darkness seems to settle over the land.

SOME time later on I wakes up to find that I'm lost in the brush. I can't see no familiar objects, and I never carries a compass. Finally I climbs to the top for a look at the direction of the sun, and I finds myself looking at that big oil lamp in the Mint Hall. I seem to be all alone. I digs some candle wax out of my eye, and sizes the place up.

"It—it was the night—night before Christmas——"

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I hears a small thin voice. I raises up and sees Scenery. He's laying flat on his back, with both legs up the side of the stage, and hugged tight in his arms is a pair of bright purple chaps. His Adam's apple bobs up and down a few times, and then—

"Not a critter was stirring, not even a mouse."

"If I—only—had—a—a desirable—seat," complains Sourdough's voice, and I looks up on the stage.

Sourdough is laying across what was once the stall for that steer. I rises up a little higher, and then I hears Tellurium's voice under me—

"That—huh—takes a load off—uh—my soul."

"I—I wishes to call your attention to our next number," states another voice, and I sees old Judge Steele raise up out of a pile of mashed chairs.

He weaves there for a while, trying to put his left hand inside of the vest he ain't wearing no more.

"I—I wishes to call your attention to our next—" he repeats, unsteady-like, and just then Sourdough shakes loose from that stall.

He falls off the stage, but gets right up and pilgrims for the door, shaking his head and muttering:

"Not me, Judge! Not any more. You never can call my attention to nothing any more."

And he weaves out of the door.

"Set down, Judge!" says I. "You're overruled."

He hangs on to the back of a chair for a moment, nods his head, agreeable-like, and says—

"I accepts the nomination."

Then he sets down on that mass of wreckage again.

I unhooks my carcass from that tree and follers Sourdough. At the door I finds that yaller burro. He's standing there in the cold, with his ears drooped, like he was mighty sad, and when I comes out he sort of twitches one ear about an inch to show his delight.

"Yaller mule," says I, putting my arm around his neck, "you never turns me down. All this time you been waiting at the door. Home, James."

"I been waiting for the owner of that devilish brute to show up," states a voice behind us, and I turns to see Half Mile Smith, with a rock in his hand, and murder in his eye. "I could have killed the burro, but I wanted to also kill the man what owns such a thing. Nothing on earth or in the waters under the earth can kick me that hard and get away alive. Sabe?"

Half Mile don't know much about burros. The proper place to speak to or about a burro is to its face. I can still feel Half Mile's heart beat, so I drags him inside and shuts the door. Then me and Lodestone starts for home.

It's bright moonlight, and pretty soon I sees a man ambling toward us. It's Mighty Jones.

"Happy New Years,' Ike," says he. "Have you seen my bear?"

"A joyful hanging to you, Mighty," says I. "I have not. The last thing I seen was that steer and bear logging off the Christmas-tree supply. Where's everybody?"

"Some in Holt's hotel, some hived up at Buck's, and some are just naturally getting as far away as possible. Wish I knowed where that bear is. He got excited, and a grizzly can't get excited and leave well enough alone. I spends the whole day finding him in a haystack, and it makes him sore to be pulled out. Training bears is a gift, Ike."

"It may be a gift but it's a poor Christmas present, Mighty. Hope you find him."

And then we pilgrims on.

There ain't no light in our cabin, but I sees an object on the steps. I walks up, slow-like, and am greeted with a shivery sort of a wail, and the object proclaims to be Mighty's pet cub. Poor little feller is half froze, and acts like an overgrown pup what is on a still hunt for a friend. I hears voices inside, so I stops to listen.

"He'll be here pretty soon," I hears Magpie opine, and then Slim seems to complain:

"Can't we have a little fire, Magpie? I don't like to freeze to death in the dark."

"Wait a while, Slim. If he sees the light he won't come in. Him and Mighty must have been in cahoots to bust up the show. I'd love to murder both of them for bringing that burro and bear into the hall."

"I—I—I'm danged near froze to death!" wails Cobalt. "You can't run all the way up here without no socks and boots on and not get frost-bit! We never can get even with Ike if we freeze to death before he shows up."

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"That's the idea," chatters Slim. "Light up, Magpie."

The little bear looks up at me and wails way down in his throat, sort of friendly-like.

"Little bear," says I, "you cold? Want to go in the cabin? All right, old trailer, you gets your wish." And I opens that door about three inches.

That bear sure understood doors, 'cause he just shoves his nose into that crack, flings her wide open, and his rear end flips around the corner, as somebody scratches a match inside.

I don't know who got excited and upset the stove and cupboard, but I do know that Slim Hawkins is the champion broad jumper of the world, and Cobalt Williams is second.

Slim sails out of that door like a swaller, and just seems to dust the snow at intervals. Cobalt slipped on the step, and only made about twenty-five feet, but his second equaled Slim's.

"Two gone," says I, and just then a gun barks in the cabin, and that little bear follers Slim and Cobalt. He's all humped up, and his voice proclaims that he's a lot displeased.

"Three," says I. "Company all gone, Magpie?"

"Come in and shut that door!" he yowls.

I obeys, and lights the lamp. Magpie sure is some picture to look at. He is perched on the edge of that cupboard like a big red bird, and around his neck is wrapped a yaller blanket. He shivers there, with a gun in his hand, and a look of misery on his lean face.

"Magpie," says I, "I'm ashamed to think that you'd suspect your old pardner of wrong-doing. I reckon you figured that it was a case of three wise men waiting for a fool, didn't you?"

He sort of nods and scratches his chin.

"Ike," says he, "I've been thinking things over, and I've come to the conclusion that there's only a short jump between being a wise man or a fool. Which do you figure you are?"

"I seen Cobalt and Slim leave a warm cabin to gambol over the Wintry landscape, and I've looked at you, perched up there, freezing to death, so, looking things over without prejudice, Magpie, I concludes I'm wiser than any of you. What do you think?"

"Think, ——!" he wails. "It takes brains to think! Please start a fire, Mister Solomon."

THE BEGGAR

by OSCAR C. WILLIAMS

MY HEART is full of shining gold
Without the spurious coins of care;
But oh, I have not used it yet
To buy me clothes to wear.

My joyous feet-dance on and on
Upon the life-paved roads they choose;
But still, I have not put them yet
In patent-leather shoes.

My life is careless, gay and free,
And beauty-tinged, like the dawns of God;
Oh, no! I have not laid it yet
Beneath the dull, dull sod!

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AN EPISODE IN ORIENTATION

by Daniel Louis Hanson

Author of "A Case in Diplomacy," "A Trade Maneuver in Povalia," etc.

TWELVE days out of Bergen and at six o'clock of that beautiful June evening, the *Karl Johann* was warped into the East Boston dock and her hawsers attached to terra firma to the great joy of her four hundred and over passengers. We had taken, of course, the most northern route, some of us persistently insisting that Greenland had been sighted, and our progress had been slow. Still, as our treatment by the officers had been most royal we gladly subscribed our names to the testimonial usual on such occasions and toasted *Kaptein* Thoresen and his crew in some of the rarest of vintages.

At seven o'clock I had been through customs and was waiting for a taxi at the curb outside of the dock offices. While standing there thanking the Fates for their kindly treatment of me on those infested seas, the former occupant of Stateroom 14 had passed by attended by a porter carrying his luggage.

I knew him by sight, Rampoot Dhann was the name he had gone by—a small man with a sort of gliding motion when walking and the most silent of individuals, eating his meals at the captain's table hurriedly, then with a little bow to us, slipping back into his stateroom. Never was he seen on deck except at night and only then by himself. I certainly didn't like Rampoot Dhann, he gave me a creepy feeling.

And now Rampoot Dhann again made that funny little bow as he passed and I out of courtesy returned his salutation—then I got into the taxi, but something restrained me from giving the correct destination to the chauffeur.

"To Scollay Square," I said.

Arrived at that most busy center of Boston, I dismissed the taxi and walked the four blocks up Tremont Street to the Upmore Hotel, my luggage consisting of only a light suitcase weighing not over a dozen pounds—a mere feather in comparison with the seventy pounds I carried those eight months in the Vosges. I might have gone to the Parker or to the Touraine, but at both of those hostelries I was well known and I had neither time nor inclination for social affairs till I had discharged myself of the trust which I had carried about with me under my heart for those three weeks since I left Amsterdam.

I didn't even inscribe my right name on the register—"Raymond Boyd" I wrote, and "New York City" as my address. Then I insisted on a room on one of the midway floors, "with bath individual to it" and without balcony, but toward the street and Common. I inspected several rooms before I found one to suit me—Number 1112—on the eleventh floor of course, not over large, and with the window projecting the narrowest of sills toward the street. It had a bathroom, but that with only one door—the one into my bedroom. And the door into the hall was a massive affair with heavy bolt on the inside.

Over it was a narrow transom, not more than nine inches from top to bottom, of solid wood and hinged at the lower edge, operating with transom rod, but only opening to an angle of forty-five degrees. It was impossible for even the most ferret-built of bell-boys to get in over that; nor could any one look from the hall

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over the transom and into my room.

The rooms suited me to a T and I got ready for bed at once, as there had been no sleep those last two nights we had skirted the American coast, all the passengers having been on deck wearing life-preservers. So I took a bath, again put on that belt which had been part of me for three long weeks, day and night, and having donned my pajamas crept under the covers with a feeling that life was really worth living after all. First, of course, I had closed the window—much as I loved fresh air, I couldn't enjoy it during my slumbers till after my trust had been discharged.

I don't know how long I had slept, probably some hours, when I awoke with a feeling that something was pressing around me, choking me. I decided it was the belt. Surely no harm could come to it in that isolated room with a door which had an inch bolt running half a foot into the casing and with a window that was double-locked and entirely inaccessible to any one not an aviator. So I unbuckled the belt and laid it on a chair near the bed on which my clothing was orderly hung. That done and I again was asleep.

It was seven when I next woke and the dream which had entertained me was still fresh in memory: that pet dog we had in the trenches near Belfort, had been scratching at the door to my dug-out—how we live again in our dreams the experiences of those days and nights when our lives hung by but a thread, when tomorrow's sun was only a remote contingency to us.

I jumped out of bed and walked over to the window, the shade of which I raised; it was raining, the drops beating against the glass, so I didn't lift up the sash. Outside I saw the dear old Common with its odd-looking kiosks and the khaki-covered tents; beyond the gilded dome of the State House—how great it was to be again in the land of the living—to the right the spire of Park Street Church with the glint of the wet grass in Granary Burial Ground as the horizon of my view in that direction. Only a few hours and I would be free to mix with the pedestrians already peopling the pavements of the streets and the paths on the Common.

I turned back toward the bed to dress myself; after that I should have breakfast in my room—strawberries, cantaloup, coffee, toast, eggs and bacon—then I felt myself growing absolutely cold. It surely must be there somewhere—I hadn't been out of the room. In my fright I threw the clothing this way and that—but all in vain; the belt was nowhere to be found. I even pulled the mattress off the bed, rummaged the drawers of the dresser—not a sign to be seen of that belt with its priceless contents! My satchel I turned inside out.

Was the door unlocked? I tried it; nothing short of a battering-ram would have opened that door from the outside. But the belt was gone.

I snatched down the receiver of the telephone.

"Send the manager up to Room 1112—in a hurry, please!" I cried.

In a moment there was a knock at the door.

"This is the floor-clerk; can I do anything for you?" he asked in a low voice, as I opened the door a trifle.

"Just what I asked over the telephone—I want the manager of the hotel here," I answered.

It wasn't long before that functionary made his appearance. When he was inside and the door again closed, I stated the situation to him in a very few words.

"I understand of course that no liability is attached to the hotel in this matter," I said, "but of course you want this kept quiet and want me to get my belt and its contents back again."

"Most certainly, I do," he replied, a good-sized man and from the West, as I afterward learned. "I guess we had better have the house detective up," he added and proceeded to telephone for that functionary.

Breeze, the house detective, proved to be a man of no vision, rather an advanced type of a watchman, but one who knew his own limitations. He listened carefully to my story now told for the second time, then turned to his chief:

"This is pretty serious, Mr. Osborn, and I don't suppose you want the police in it till necessary. I wish we could get at Colonel Ogilive."

Mr. Osborn shook his head—

"Colonel Ogilive is approaching the eighty mark, and seldom leaves his house except that daily journey to the bank."

"Colonel Ogilive of the Ogilive Trust Company?" I asked.

"The same gentleman. He has always

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had the knack of getting at matters of this kind, an avocation of his. Is said to have been with Allan Pinkerton in the Civil War——"

"Let's get him," I exclaimed in my enthusiasm, "I am quite sure he will come—in fact I have a letter to him, and the belt's contents were to be turned over to him at noon today—that is to the Ogilive Trust Company"

Now it should be made clear that while I had told both of my companions of what was in the belt, still I had withheld from them the ownership of the treasure. But in spite of that Osborn was immediately alert—probably grasping at any straw that would save publicity.

"I'll get him on the wire and you can talk with him," he said, and in a very few minutes considering the unseasonable hour for a business man of eighty, I heard Colonel Ogilive's voice.

"Well, sir, what can I do for you?"

"This is Robert Maitland talking," I said, and could see the changed attitude of both the manager and his house detective.

Robert Maitland meant more to them than the "Raymond Boyd" who was assigned to Room 1112.

"You probably have been advised of my coming and of my mission?"

"Yes, and have been a little worried; of course a transatlantic passage is something not to be made in five days now," he answered.

"Well, I arrived all right but I have had a most serious misfortune—I really shouldn't be talking over the telephone at all." I gave my hotel.

There was a short silence at the other end, then—

"I'll come right over to your room—in twenty minutes I'll be there."

WE WAITED for him, all three, and it was less than the allotted time when he knocked at the door of my room. He and Mr. Osborn were acquainted somewhat, and the house detective knew him by sight, but it was to me he turned—that military-looking gentleman.

"You mean that you have lost the packet you were enstrusted with?"

At the same time I noticed he sniffed the air in the room, as if it puzzled him.

"I had it—that is the belt in which it was—at eight o'clock last evening and I had it some hours later." Then I went on and told the story for the third time. I ended with, "And the only thing through which anything could have come was that transom up there."

Colonel Ogilive studied the room, walked into the bath, opened the window and looked down the sheer precipice of eleven stories which separated us from the pavement of Tremont Street. Then he began to look over my clothing still on the chair and floor where I had dropped it in my frantic search.

"Did you wear only one sock yesterday?" he demanded.

Of course I had worn two, had hung two on the chair-rung the evening before, and so told him. But hunt as we might, only one of my hose was to be found. Colonel Ogilive, however, left us three to looking for that, while he carefully overhauled the rest of my clothing. Presently he lifted an undershirt and sniffed at it in that peculiar way of his.

"The air in the room is close," he said. "Don't you gentlemen so think?"

I explained that I had kept the window closed all night as a matter of precaution, at which he smiled; then he held the garment toward Breeze.

"What does that faint odor remind you of?" he asked.

"That animal store down on Bromfield Street," said the house detective after a moment of rather audible sniffing.

Ogilive nodded his head.

"That's what I thought of," he said, then turning to Mr. Osborn: "Will you have brought up here the pages of your register covering arrivals since that of Mr. Maitland? Also a clerk who can give some information."

Mr. Osborn hastened to issue instructions over the wire which in a few minutes brought a clerk with the loose pages of the register. Colonel Ogilive took the sheets to the light and studied them carefully. Presently he called the register clerk to him and pointed to one line:

"Do you recall this John Johnson?" he asked.

"Yes, I do, sir; at the time he impressed me as being somewhat different from what one would expect from that name. He is a little man, sort of glides along in both his walk and speech alike; rubber-heeled in

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both I should say. Though I am alert on duty, I really didn't see him come up till he was studying the register. When he spoke he sort of took you unawares in the same way—I mean you know when most people are going to speak to you—I didn't with him."

"Small, you say? Did he look like an American?"

"Yes, small in all ways as to figure and with a funny bow. He made me think of a foreigner. He was particular about a room, wouldn't take one on the tenth nor one on the twelfth. He didn't want one on the street side. Finally he was placed in 1134. It took fully an hour to fix him up and a lot of patience."

"Where is 1134 in relation to this room?" asked Ogilive.

"Right across the hall—just opposite, and facing the court. The chap had a lot of baggage, some of it the wickerware kind."

"That's interesting to learn," said Colonel Ogilive, then turning to me, "You have heard the description given of this John Johnson who registered here shortly after midnight according to the register figures, does he remind you of any one you ever have known?"

"Of Rampoot Dhann," I said at once, and went on to give some information of that gentleman from the time I first saw him in Bergen.

Colonel Ogilive listened closely to me, then addressing himself to the manager, asked—

"The court as I recall the construction of this hotel is a regular well, the building surrounding it on all sides?"

Mr. Osborn stated that was the case.

"Only open to the outside at the top. From the ground level there are only two exits, one through the office, the other through the kitchens."

"Permit me then to make some suggestions; first that no one be allowed to leave room 1134; then that a watchman be placed in the court who will keep an eye on the windows of that same 1134. Thank you. Before you go, Mr. Breeze, could you recall among your acquaintances, easy of access, a good marksman?"

The house detective thought for a minute:

"There is Finnerty over in Chelsea—that is if he is at home yet." He looked at his watch. "I am afraid he has gone——"

"May I suggest," broke in the clerk, "that we happen to have one right here in the hotel, Captain Black of Pittsfield—you know him, Mr. Osborn."

"Most certainly I do; Captain Black of the many medals. Captain Black holds more trophies for marksmanship than all the rest of our run of guests together."

"I wonder if you could prevail on Captain Black to give us the benefit of his accuracy? We should want him at once; a good repeating rifle would be the proper weapon, I imagine."

Osborn turned to his clerk.

"Suppose you run down to his room, that would be more decent than calling him on the phone; my compliments, of course, and the proper sort of invitation attached to it."

Both the clerk and Breeze being gone Ogilive addressed himself to Osborn:

"Isn't there a storeroom or something of the kind on the other side of the court from which we could get a view of 1134—that is, of its windows? Suppose then that we take a look while Maitland attires himself in something more suitable to a workaday world than pajamas."

I was finishing tying my cravat when the colonel and the manager came back, followed in a few minutes by the clerk and Captain Black who proved himself a most genial individual and ready for anything that promised "sport."

The case was stated to him by Colonel Ogilive, ending with:

"Now if you are with us, Captain Black, I am going to ask you to take your place at the window of the storeroom which will be indicated to you by our friend the clerk; then Mr. Osborn and I will attempt entry to 1134. Very likely something will endeavor to get out the windows of 1134 and make its way to the roof—that will be your opportunity."

"And I am to drop it—whether it is human or otherwise?" asked the indomitable sportsman.

"Whether human or otherwise—so long as it has four feet," the colonel assured him, looking at his watch. "Now we will wait ten minutes which will enable Mr. Maitland to take his station on the floor of the court. Three of us—for here is Mr. Breeze—endeavoring to get entrance to 1134, we mustn't forget that its occupant is a gentleman registered here and must be treated as such, Mr. Osborn," to which

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the manager gave assent. "Captain Black and our alert registry clerk in the storeroom window; and Mr. Maitland on the floor of the court—have you a weapon with you, Maitland? That's good, I don't need to ask if you can use it. Have it conveniently at hand."

All that I know from personal knowledge of the stirring events of the next fifteen minutes was what I observed from my station on the floor of the court. I had hardly found a good point of observation—a table set out from the overcrowded kitchen, when I saw a window—it proved to be that of Room 1134, thrown open and something ape-like, though much smaller and of strange color for such an animal, come out upon the sill; then the face and arm of Rampoot Dhann—the lips jabbering away, though I couldn't hear from that distance, and the hand pointing upward.

All that but a minute; then the animal began to mount up, a telephone or light cable giving a medium of ascent.

Any admiration I may have felt at the time for Colonel Ogilive's correct analysis of the situation was cut short by the crack of a rifle—then another, though the second was unnecessary, for the animal had already begun to fall. Within an instant of its touching the cement pavement of the court, I was beside it and emptied a chamber of my revolver in the flattened-out mass. It was a tiny and most pitiable thing, of the monkey or ape family, and with a look of fear on its face that death had left there. Around the body was wrapped my belt in which I could feel the treasure I had carried about my person those weeks.

Glad as I was to get back the belt, I could not but feel a pity for the tiny thing that lay stiff on the pavement, the innocent victim of man's cupidity—a pity by the way that had never come to me on the battlefield when looking down on a human being cold in death. So contradictory are the emotions of the sons of men.

AN HOUR later I was seated in the room of Colonel Ogilive in the Ogilive Trust Company, as that gentleman was eating his simple breakfast of fruit, toast and eggs. I had naturally been most profuse in my compliments over the banker's astuteness in putting his finger unerringly on the culprit, as well as the methods adopted by the wily Rampoot Dhann. But my friend and benefactor brushed all my complimentary phrases away with a wave of his hand.

"My dear Maitland," he said, "there is no such thing as a new crime—simply modern applications of old methods. Therefore there is not much of anything left in the way of clews, except as fiction writers develop them at so much per word. There is confirmatory evidence of course. For instance, having been told your story of the disappearance of the belt with its near a million in jewels—jewels the presence of which were necessary in this country to avoid a breach in one of our oldest families and the consequent scandal—having been told your story, I had two courses, one to look upon you as a liar—which you did not look or act like—the other to believe that you really had been robbed.

"Taking the latter course and having seen your room, I was forced to one conclusion, that the robbery had been committed by means of the open transom. The size of that opening precluded any human being from having entered—therefore it must have been an animal. I had no clews which forced me to that conclusion, just common sense. But having gotten that far, I had precedent to fall back on; Dr. Conan Doyle introduces the animal agency in his story, 'The Speckled Band,' but it was ages old before he used it, though he varied the details somewhat.

"Singo Bar used small pets to rob the rajahs of India hundreds of years ago; Monsieur Rabeur was an expert at that sort of a game in the days before the French Revolution and was finally guillotined in Paris as a fitting end to his activities. I might entertain you all day with well-known and carefully recorded instances of this method, yet have said enough to indicate to you that Rampoot Dhann wasn't playing any new game. And that I wasn't uncanny in my analysis."

"But still the application—" I began.

The colonel shrugged his shoulders and helped himself to another piece of toast.

"That you had been followed clear from Amsterdam—though Rampoot Dhann did not come within your scope of vision till you reached Bergen, was no matter of surprise to you—you had been warned of that. That no effort was made to rob you on the steamer was natural; the rigid search all incoming passengers are subjected to, would

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have made it impossible to get the jewels into the United States. Such being the case, I felt sure you had been followed to your hotel—but by whom?

"Well, there again I had the assistance of the past to aid me; practically all the successful diamond and other precious-jewel robberies have been pulled off by Orientals—especially if—as seemed to be the case here—the mediumship of an animal had been utilized. When the register arrived I looked for a handwriting that indicated to one posted in that sort of thing—and you must remember that forty years' banking has given me some insight into handwriting—that the person practising it had acquired his skill, and had not been born to it.

"That is, the name John Johnson was written by a man who had learned writing English later in life than his boyhood. I picked that name—that signature—unerringly from among a score of others, as written by one to whom the name of John Johnson was a misfit."

"That was mighty clever," I insisted.

"It was part of my trade, Maitland; the description of Johnson by the clerk and his identification by you as Rampoot Dhann, made the matter as clear as day, especially when the clerk spoke about the wickerware baggage that Johnson had carried. How else could he carry a pet about than in wickerware luggage? Coming back again to precedents—for by this time I couldn't help but classify the case with the earlier activities of Singo Bar in Ceylon and Monsieur Rabeur in Paris, I felt sure that Rampoot Dhann would seek to get rid of his booty by sending his pet over the buildings with it.

"For of course, he had been so particular about choice of room that he might not only be near yours, but have some means of covering himself in case of being cornered. We needed then, something more than the apprehension of Rampoot himself—it was the belt and its contents we had to secure. You see the rest clearly, of course."

"But I didn't see what happened in the hall where you, Osborn and the clerk were stationed," I said.

"That's true, you were in the court below. Well, I rapped at the door and received no answer—the transom was closed. Then Mr. Osborn rapped and announced himself as the manager anxious to see Mr. Johnson. Again silence—then Osborn gave a vigorous kick at the panel—all of us keeping pretty well to one side, for gentlemen of Rampoot Dhann's profession are not to be depended upon as playing the game according to Hoyle. Then we heard the two shots, followed by a third, though more distant in sound.

"It was well we were standing to one side, for just then the door was swung open and Rampoot Dhann made a quick exit. We missed entirely the contents of the bottle he threw in our direction—or where he thought we would most naturally be, in front of the door—and Osborn and Breeze were on him in a moment. It was a fierce fight while it lasted, but the Oriental was, as you know, a puny fellow."

"And what will be done with him?" I asked.

"He will be held on some trivial charge—I have explained enough about the belt and its contents to Osborn so that he will keep quiet; as for the clerk, Breeze, and Captain Black—the three have been reached in various ways so that nothing will get out. Rampoot Dhann will be held on a trivial charge, as I have said, but only for a very short time; tuberculosis, the arch-enemy of the Oriental in this climate, already has him by the throat and it is only a short time before there will be no Rampoot Dhann. Suppose that we check up the contents of your treasure-belt, my boy, so that a proper receipt be given you and the honorarium that your successfully ended task calls for."

"Just a question," I hastened to add, "you smelled of the undershirt, wasn't that discovering a clew?"

"Just confirmatory evidence, Maitland; the catty smell—no, it was different from catty—Breeze analyzed it correctly—the zoo—simply made me feel sure that it was another case of Singo Bar and Monsieur Rabeur. Probably the animal carried over that transom various things before he brought to Rampoot Dhann the sought-after belt. Everything was returned except that one hose. The scratching of the pet dog in your dream was simply dream plus reality. Poor little pet."

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AMERICA HORNS IN

An Up and Down the Earth Tale

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

by Talbot Mundy

Author of "Hira Singh's Tale," "Oakes Respects an Adversary," etc.

THAT lumpy, rock-littered hillock, scattered with thorn-scrub, stewing in the heat reflected and shut down on it by the western slopes of the Libomba Hills was no heavenly spot to idle in—no place for hesitation. Indecision in those fever countries is a sickness worse than the malaria itself.

The climate had already set its teeth into Fred Oakes' leathern constitution, and he lay in his tent shivering with incipient ague, gargling to get the taste of fever from his mouth, and bad-tempered to explosiveness. Some of our best servants had deserted to the enemy; and that was to be expected; yet more were likely to follow them if we lingered, for we, albeit white men, were strangers in the land, whereas Charles du Maurier's bloody name was a byword of long standing all up and down the countryside. If the Portuguese Government dared not try issues with him, who was a next-to-naked Ronga savage that he should do better?

There was only one of us to be depended on, for I was inexperienced, as well as new to the tropics, although still healthy from the fresh air and hard living of a long voyage. But Lord Montdidier, casual and careless though he liked to seem to be, was in fact a very downy bird indeed, and far too alert a counselor to let any situation go from bad to worse.

He could be the most exasperating, non-committal looker-on who was ever asked to give opinions, and he could say the opposite of what he thought with a cultivated smoothness that bewildered whom he wished. But he was a comforting man to share tight corners with, if only because panic-proof.

"That peculiar scoundrel du Maurier," he said to me, as we washed before our tents, "is probably planning a surprise for us. Suppose we steal a march, and disappoint him—what?"

"I'd like to burn his roost!" said I, squinting up at the aerie fifteen hundred feet above us, from which the self-styled King of the Libombas could see all the trails and any one approaching. One of his thatched roofs was barely visible above the rim of the cliff. "I'll swarm up there and have it out with the half-breed brute alone if you'll give me leave!"

I was no more in love than was he or Oakes with the notion of being blackmailed or hectored by an outlaw, although recent subjection to the mate of an undermanned British bark might have been supposed to give me the submissive habit.

Montdidier looked at me in the lazy way that I was beginning to recognize as the screen behind which he did swift thinking. In that part of the world the men one hires at random, as he and Oakes had hired me,

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very seldom turn out to be capable of loyalty, or worth much when in difficulties, and I dare say he was wondering how much of my boast was due to anxiety to please, and how much bluff.

"Oakes is in favor of burning all Gazaland," he answered, "and after that Lisbon and the King of Portugal. Did you hear him throw his tea over the native just now? Scalded the boy. Oakes is full of war. I'm thinking of the claims."

Not very far away in front of us, along the wavering line of the lower foothills, stood long rows of peeled and squared pegs that Oakes and I had remained to watch, while Montdidier went to Lourenço Marques to get registration papers, and a concession to work the mine. I knew nothing whatever of either precious stones or gold in those days, but the other two had assured me there was wealth beneath the parallelograms of barren-looking land sufficient to have made King Solomon of Jerusalem consider himself a pauper; and that was an exciting thought.

But I looked hard at Montdidier. My contract calling for wages by the month and no share of the profits made it easy to take a lofty attitude, and I wondered whether the climate had seeped into his system too.

"If he were really a man, he would scuff that buzzard du Maurier first, and see to the claims later on," thought I. But Montdidier went on talking, telling no more of his thoughts than he saw fit. It seemed impossible to believe that he had been the best polo forward of his day, the keenest, suddenest squadron leader of the Indian army, and a fencer of international fame. Yet Oakes had told me he was all those things. One could understand more easily his playing chess, although I have never been able to beat him at the game, try how I might.

"We'll go from here," he said, eying the breakfast that two Zulu boys were spreading painstakingly. "We've pegged out the pay-dirt du Maurier would never have located but for us, and that may keep the scoundrel quiet. Aren't you sick of the country? What?"

"Not enough to quit without fighting," I answered. "How was it you couldn't get title deeds from the Government? Wouldn't they grant them?"

He smiled as if failure had amused him.

"The Portuguese asked me for money. And after that for some money. And then for some money. And then more money. I bribed them all in suitable amounts, from a man who said he was lieutenant-governor downward. Then they told me the papers would have to go to Lisbon to be signed. So I haven't title. I think we may as well all go to Lourenço Marques."

"Du Maurier will jump the claims the minute your back's turned," I objected.

It exasperated me to think of that half-breed Mauritius-French murderer scoring off any one who paid me wages.

"Let's hope so," he answered, smiling, and I stared.

"Why?" I asked bluntly.

"I detest being sniped on the march. He can't sit on claims and follow us too—eh?—what?"

"What's that, Monty?" Oakes roared from the tent.

He was in a condition the low fever of the country makes familiar, of seeming the one sane man in all the world, the one sorry man; whatever was said by any one was wrong, and his own voice could only be raised in protest—wrong, too, because too feeble. He came out, blinking at the sun through bloodshot eyes, and viewed the breakfast table with disgust.

"What's that I heard you say?"

"Lourenço Marques, Fred."

"Rot, my good man! I won't go!"

But Montdidier showed his strong white teeth in a smile, and pointed to a hammock, already prepared from blankets and a pole. Our four strongest natives were squatting beside it, satisfied to have the personal task of carrying a white man. They will jib at half the dead weight; but to tote a live, bad-tempered human is an honor.

Oakes grinned too, weakly because the fever had hold of him, but none the less determined.

"Monte, you —— fool, if you have me slung in that thing I'll cut the lashings!"

"All right," said Montdidier; "come and eat."

Oakes pecked at tea and biscuits while Montdidier and I made a meal. Then, at a sign the natives raised the hammock, and Montdidier gathered Oakes up as if he were a child—some two hundred and forty pounds of him—went through his pockets—confiscated his knife—and dumped him into the appointed place, the

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two of them struggling and squealing like a pair of schoolboys.

"Who wins?" Montdidier demanded.

"—— you!" exploded Oakes. "Give me a mule to ride.

But Montdidier, for reasons of his own, had sent the mules to the kraal of a near-by chief to be cared for.

"Get out if you like, Fred! Put me to the trouble of lifting you in again, and I'll take away your boots, socks, and trousers! If that won't work, I'll tie you in!"

BEFORE the sun was an hour high we had struck camp and were on the march in the inevitable single file, Oakes in advance, blasphemous in the blanket hammock, I on the flank to avoid the smell of loaded porters, that I have never yet grown used to, and Montdidier last, stalking along in football shorts, with a rifle under his arm. How he contrived not to have the skin all shredded from his knees by thorns was a mystery. My own were sore, and bleeding through tough cloth before a mile was passed.

I turned to look back, for the disgust at leaving good, rich claims behind us haunted me, and my eye rose tier by tier, level after level, until it rested on the topmost peak of the ridge above us, and I saw a dark speck that well might be a man. Letting Montdidier overtake me I asked him for his field-glass.

There, sure enough, du Maurier stood, looking like Napoleon at that range, all alone, one hand in his bosom, chin on chest in meditation.

"Look!" said I, and Montdidier took the glasses.

He looked for a minute, and returned the glasses to their case. He almost never laughed aloud, but had a way of throwing his head back and going through the motions that was simply diabolical until one knew him intimately.

Personally I could see no cause for amusement, and it was evident that Oakes agreed with me. Not only was he not amused, he was vehemently discontented. We passed over the long, lean spur of the farthest reaching foothill, and, instead of turning eastward toward the Limpopo River, and Chai Chai where the steamer started for the coast, we swung to the south.

"Where are we going, Monty?" he shouted. "Didums, you —— fool, where are you leading us?"

Montdidier overtook him at a run, to restore equanimity among the bearers; for Oakes had kicked and threatened them into rank disorder.

"To the swamps, old dear—to the swamps. There, that'll do, men—into step again—now, carry on!"

"To the swamps? Are you mad?"

"Not more than usual, Fred."

"Then what in the name of Bedlam is the idea?" Are you saving steamer fares? Are we broke?"

"No, old thing, we've money."

"Then what does this mad maneuver mean?"

"We're in love with solitude."

"Don't be an idiot, Didums! What did you take this cursed way for? We'll be eaten by crocks and mosquitoes! Look at 'em—big as hornets!"

It is not wise to let a man with East Coast fever darken counsel with his everlasting disagreements, but there is a point beyond which it is unsafe to let wrath boil. Montdidier explained.

"Du Maurier's family, you old fathead! The bloodsome Charles has probably asked them to waylay us between the hills and Chai Chai, so behold! We make a circuit!"

"You mean we act like a circus!" Oakes objected. "If they're after us, they'll wait a day, and then get on our trail! Bah! Give me my gruel in the open! Who wants to be tossed to crocks in this blasted swamp?"

"It's all one, old dear," Montdidier answered. "Carry him gently, boys! On the veld hyenas crack your bones and laugh like ghouls!"

"Better than crocks!" swore Oakes, "that lie belly on you in the mud until you're tender! Ough!"

The going as we neared the swamps became abominable, and we two had to walk on each side of the hammock, with a hand to steady it and save the boys from slipping with it sideways into the slimy, scum-covered water. Mosquitoes attacked us until we were a mass of blood, and flies added to the torment. Through gaps in the mangroves I could see that kites were wheeling, doubtless with an eye on us, and many a time I detected the snout of a crocodile, laid between two stumps in the hope that some unwary one might set his foot on it.

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But we had a Shangan boy who swore he knew the way, and Montdidier persisted in trusting him. One of his peculiar gifts was the ability to tell good niggers from the bad ones—a trick that Oakes only learned in degree as time went on, and I never learned at all, although there were times when I flattered myself.

The nights in that swamp were the worst part, for then in the noisy darkness—noisy with night-fowl and the plunging crash and cry of half-amphibious beasts—the sensation of being lost was overwhelming. We had Oakes well covered with mosquito netting, but our own pieces were torn all to shreds. If he could have seen us in the dark he would have torn up his own net rather than have the better of either of us, I don't doubt, but those nights were three occasions when we fooled him.

About mid-morning of the fourth day we emerged by way of a dangerous causeway made of half-submerged mangrove poles, into a bay near the mouth of the Limpopo. We were unrecognizable—unclean—and so nearly dead-beat, niggers and all, that another day of it would probably have been the end of us. But we had shaken off the du Mauriers, and that seemed sufficient reward for the moment. The sense of being hunted through the swamps had made me, for one, more wretched than had all the other plagues combined.

There was a rickety dug-out canoe hauled up among the mangroves, and in that we crossed to the Portuguese station at the bar, making nearly a dozen trips before we had all our loads and niggers over. The white-smeared Government hospital—devoid of almost all stores except quinin and castor oil—looked like a palace; and the doctor let us use his genuine imported bath. Then he spread castor oil on our sores, and overdosed us with quinin until the singing in our ears was torment; but, in spite of the medicine, Oakes recovered—very swiftly when a cool sea-breeze blew in and kicked up a big surf on the bar. When the steamer arrived a day late he was well again and quite sweet-tempered, Montdidier now making the worst showing of the three.

The captain of the twin-screw tug that its owners called a "liner"—on the principle that she took the same trip twice a week, and carried far too many passengers—had been drinking brandy this trip in place of *vino tinto*, and was therefore more than usually drunk—anti-English, opinionative, surly. Insulted at the notion of having to carry Englishmen, he ordered the lines cast off from the ramshackle wharf almost before our last loads were on board. Then he sent the mate below for daring to offer advice about the course—rang for full speed ahead with both screws—swung with the flowing tide—and hit the bar head-on at full speed, so hard that we piled up almost clear of the water.

There we had to stay ten days, taking occasional boat trips to the shore to trade the same old yarns with the doctor, fishing for sharks overside, or shooting duck to restock the empty larder. They were dreary, weary days until a Spring tide with a high wind came and lifted us; but we all got well again; and the delay was a godsend in another way besides, although at the moment we were affected by that strange state of mind that resents intrusion even on flattest boredom.

"Plans! Plans! Plans!" Oakes insisted often enough.

Then Montdidier would take his seat on a pile of old sails and awnings abaft the funnel, and we would begin discussing how to prevent the du Mauriers from taking by force claims that the Government was too corrupt and feeble to protect.

But somehow or other, whenever those conversations started, a chance word or a phrase would set Montdidier to recounting reminiscences, and, for a while at least, the "Thousand and One Nights" became mere dry trash by comparison. But the steamer's captain had sobered up, and presently, when I saw him inventing ways of listening without seeming to, I understood.

IT WAS the day before we finally poled off the bar that another white man came—not a "mean white," but a young man cleaner than ourselves, and as well supplied with tents, guns, and servants. At the first glance he was obviously not an Englishman, even if one could not have seen his rifles, and the pump-gun; but he had picked up something of the Englishman's reserve, no doubt in self-defense. And perhaps we did not look too civilized.

At all events, he did not introduce himself, and it was several hours before he and I got in conversation, he sitting over by the windward rail watching the surf

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pounding on the steamer's side, or reading. In fact, it was my request that he lend me his book if he was not using it that broke the silent spell.

"I've only an old '*World* Almanac,' he answered, "but it's better than thinking Portuguese!"

He was a prospector like ourselves, only much more homesick.

"Gosh!" he assured me, I'd rather keep chickens for the kosher market in Hoboken than hunt a fortune in this land of thugs. Plain, ordinary murderers 'll look like Y. M. C. A. secretaries after this! I learned Portuguese in Brazil. Thought that might give me an advantage. Nothing to it, though! Riles me in two languages instead of one! I'm no fan for any brand of autocratic Government, but this colonial hold-up is the limit!"

His adventures seemed to be too depressing for discussion; but we got to exchanging personal half-confidences, feeling each other out.

"Tell me some more about your party," he urged after a while. "It's the first time I was close to a member of the House of Lords. He doesn't say 'Haw, don'tcher-know' or wear a monocle. What's the matter with him? Broke?"

"Not at all," I answered. "He's our financier. He has an income too small for his purpose—or so I understand."

"How small?"

"Four or five thousand a year."

"Four or five thousand what?"

"Pounds."

"Twenty or twenty-five thousand dollars? Income? And he chooses to function in this wilderness? What's the matter with the House of Lords that he don't stay home and ride herd on the kihg? Now he has been below and scraped off the foliage, he doesn't look like a man the police are after."

I told him, for there was never any secret about Monty's ultimate aim; he was always perfectly frank about it to friend or enemy.

"His income is all right so far as financing expeditions goes, but if he were to open up the family seat in the Midlands, it wouldn't pay the gardeners and grooms! So he and Oakes are partners, prospecting for gold and minerals. He finds the capital, and I understand they divvy up two to one. I'm paid wages."

"Have they had any luck?" he asked, and I told him about our claims in the Libomba Hills, and about Charles du Maurier. When I mentioned du Maurier's name he sat up straight and whistled.

"Please introduce me to your lord," he said. "My own name's Yerkes—William Simpson Yerkes. I think I can horn in here without offending."

When I had presented him to Montdidier we all sat cross-legged in the corner where the rotten awning threw its longest shadow, and for a minute or two he and Montdidier studied each other, while Oakes and I looked on.

"This man tells me," he said presently, jerking his head sideways toward me—he did not know yet whether I was footman, foreman, secretary, friend, or combination of all four, for Americans are funny in their non-comprehension of the working of English caste, "that you have some claims you can't get registered, and that you've trouble with a man called Charles du Maurier."

Montdidier nodded gravely, vastly too polite to hint to a stranger that his business was his own. But I caught a swift, sideways glance at me that made me hot and cold all over, and Oakes glared at me.

"I'm aware I'm horning in," said Yerkes. "Perhaps I'd do better to establish my own credentials first. I've papers—references—cast your eye on these."

He drew a long leather wallet from an inner pocket, and passed it to Montdidier, who took it, met the American's eyes, and offered it back again.

"No," said Yerkes. "Be good enough to open that and go through it. Then we'll talk if you see fit."

So Montdidier did as he was asked, and I caught sight of a passport, and what looked like a banker's draft among other things.

"My own passport is with the Standard Bank in Lourenço Marques," said Montdidier, smiling, and handing the wallet back.

"Oh, rot!" Oakes put in. "This isn't a garden party! Say what you like, America, and we'll listen!"

"All the same," said Yerkes, confining his attention to Montdidier with a quiet persistence, but regardful of Oakes' red herring, "I've shown you my papers, and when quite convenient to you I'd like to looks at yours."

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"Perfectly in order!" said Montdidier. "You shall. Come to the bank with me when we land."

"Now, America!" said Oakes.

"Well," said Yerkes, "my own tale's a sordid one. "I've a concession—papers applied for—wild rubber near the border of Segokenyan's country, where the Libombas run down toward the low veld. I have my concession all staked out, but there's a bunch of thugs inhabiting those hills, calling themselves white men, who defy the Portuguese and claim the right to levy what they call taxes.

"I refused to pay, and they hunted me off the lot. I had to get out in a hurry, and travel down the seacoast to avoid them. I've seen some Portuguese officials, and they all asked for money, but none offered to do anything. Now—has the du Maurier who troubled you got any relations that you know of?"

Montdidier looked at me. Having talked with the boastful Charles himself in Lourenço Marques, I was an authority, and I felt myself forgiven, by virtue of utility.

"He told me he has eleven brothers and five cousins," I said. They act in concert when there's trouble. When Charles du Maurier was arrested in Chai Chai they burned the fort and rescued him."

"Well," said Yerkes, "I'm not a member of any assassins' union, but I'd join this minute to get the scalps of that gang!"

"Meaning we're its walking delegates?" suggested Oakes.

"Meaning I take you for men who would rather fight than eat crow," he answered.

"Provided we got together," said Montdidier, "and our friend here—" nodding at me—"continued to like his job, there would be four of us—against their seventeen."

"Four white men against seventeen breeds!" said Yerkes.

"Bravo, America!" laughed Oakes.

It was at that point that the steamer's captain began again to show too much interest in us. There was no valid reason why he should have chosen that minute for spreading out his spare shirt on the deck near by, and squatting down to mend it. Besides, the minute we moved away he folded up the shirt and returned it to its lair in an old cigar box.

"Suppose we talk when we reach town?" Montdidier suggested, glancing at the captain.

" 'I go a-fishing,' " said Oakes, and we all got up.

So we fished overside for sharks until the next day's Spring tide lifted us; and until the tug's side pounded on the new quay piles in Lourenço Marques harbor, I think the only further reference any of us made to our affairs was when Oakes gave Yerkes a word of warning.

"The du Mauriers get supplies by this steamer, and pay double to keep the bearings smooth. The captain gets more from them in presents than his salary amounts to. He's their spy."

"Then he'll send them word that we four have met," said Yerkes.

"Maybe," Oakes answered. "I see no way of getting at the brutes."

"Nor I," said Yerkes. "I did, but now I'm cool I don't."

"Nor I," I added. "Four against seventeen men who know the natives, and every inch of the country, is steep odds."

But we were all three reckoning without Montdidier.

ONCE ashore we went to the bank first, and Yerkes was accorded his just rights. Then we took up quarters at the one respectable hotel, and while we three talked Montdidier went off on business of his own.

"This man says the House of Lords—" for so he insisted on referring to Montdidier —"is your financier," said Yerkes, after an hour of desultory conversation, and Oakes nodded. Oakes can express more enthusiasm in a nod than some could achieve with the aid of fireworks and a brass band.

The admission seemed to give the American food for thought, and after a time he, too, went off by himself, leaving Oakes and me to our own devices. It occurred to Oakes then that I was being paid for doing nothing, so he sent me down to the hotel storeroom to overhaul the tents and gear; and that took me until supper time.

So I did not see Montdidier come back, or hear the first part of his talk with the other two. But I realized at the first glance, as I took my seat at table, that they had already arrived at some agreement.

Montdidier offered me wine, but it was not so long since I was down and out that I cared to cultivate expensive tastes, and I

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refused. Yerkes refused too. Tales about Kentucky notwithstanding, I have met more Americans who prefer to campaign on water than any other breed of white man.

"How about it, now?" Montdidier asked me. "Do you like your job?"

"I like you fellows," I said, "if that's what you mean."

"I don't mean that exactly," he answered; and Oakes cut in, as ever impatient of preliminaries.

"Bosh! Tell him the news! America here has joined us—his rubber against our gold. A half-share for Monty, and a quarter each for America and me. Do you accept the situation?"

"Why not?" I asked.

"As before," said Montdidier, "no share of the profits, but we'll raise your salary ten pounds to fifty a month."

"Very generous," said I.

"Generous be ——!" said Oakes. "We'll make you work for it!"

"And you understand," said Montdidier, fingering his wine glass, "that before we can work our claims, or even secure them, we shall have to ——"

"To put the enemy out of business!" cut in Yerkes.

"Bravo, America!" said Oakes.

"We may have to fight," said Montdidier.

"I'd be glad to fight Charles du Maurier single-handed," said I. "That cold-blooded brute has been above ground too long!"

"And that brings me right to the point." Montdidier fingered his glass again, looking straight at me. "You'll remember saying that, given my leave, you would like to go up alone to his roost and tackle him?"

"Yes," said I, wondering.

"Did you mean that?"

"Certainly," I answered, ceasing to wonder so much, but suddenly feeling lonely.

"We don't doubt you meant it at the time," said Yerkes. "You were feeling right unfriendly then, and hot enough to burn your shadow up. I know that feeling. But a man grows cool after reflection. You've no interest in the property. You'd be justified in calling off your offer. I wouldn't call that backing down."

"You may keep the salary," I said. "I'll join for nothing, to have a crack at Charles du Maurier."

"Piffle!" said Oakes. "What we want to know is, can we count on you, or would you rather tackle something safe?"

"We mean," said Montdidier, "that if you'd rather, we'll give you two hundred pounds, and a steamer ticket to any port in the world you wish." And he leaned back in his chair to watch me. For that matter they all three watched me.

"I've no hesitation," said I. "I stand in with you, on your terms."

"You may be dead in a week!" said Oakes.

"In less than a week!" said Yerkes.

But I know of a dozen things that have always frightened me more than death, and that argument did not turn a hair.

"Supposing I'm shot dead tomorrow," said I. "What of it? I've no dependents—no business—no wife. Barring my possible usefulness to you, I don't know of any one who'd miss me."

"Then you'll remain with us?" Montdidier asked.

"If the choice is mine," said I, "then, yes!"

"All right," he answered. "That's settled. I'm glad. You get fifty a month from today."

"We'll write it into your contract, and initial it," said Oakes. "America here shall sign it too."

"Now we may as well make some things clear to you," said Montdidier. "I've seen the governor, and I found him after all he could get and willing to give nothing. But I remembered meeting the captain of their battle-ship lying out there in the harbor, so I took a boat and called on him. The man's a gentleman—a fine fellow—excellent in every way. Has influence, too, of the right kind.

"After a long talk he brought me back in his launch to the governor's palace, and there was straight work in a room alone between us three. He told the governor—in English, so that I could understand, too—that unless he chose to come to terms with me, and stand by his bargain, he would cable to Lisbon certain information he possessed. Blackmail—eh? Can you blackmail a blackmailer? The governor held out for money payments, backing down bit by bit, and we agreed at last. I have it all in writing, witnessed by the navy man."

"The governor is probably in tears," said Oakes. "The poor devil had to buy his job

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for a four-year term back in Lisbon. Borrowed the money. He has to make enough in four years to repay the loan and interest, support himself and family, and keep him in ease until he dies. —— hard lines I call it. Monty ought to be ashamed! You ought to have fed him, Didums! You ought to have offered to buy some stamps!"

"The agreement is this," Montdidier went on. "We get registry of our claims at once—our gold and Mr. Yerkes' rubber concession. We also get an official Portuguese member added to our party, who receives a ten per cent. share of any net profit. He is to be appointed by the governor, with full authority to hang—ah——"

"For instance, horse thieves!" put in Yerkes.

"Mule thieves, he means," said Oakes; and it began to dawn on my thought that Montdidier might have planned this all from the beginning. Had he left the mules there for a bait?

"Mule thieves—murderers—outlaws—our official member's authority is to be judicial and executive, and he's to hang them all," he went on. "Our business is to supply the physical force."

"But why can't the Portuguese send half a regiment?" I objected, and they all three laughed.

"The home Government won't stand for the expense," Montdidier answered. "Moving armed men costs money. Besides, they'd need new boots—new tents; and the contractors who have the job of feeding them in barracks would raise Cain."

"Besides," said Oakes, there's a strongly defined hope in the air that we may get the worst of the deal. The du Maurier gang's activities cover up a multitude of official sins."

"And my particular share in the proceedings is what?" I asked.

"What you offered," said Montdidier.

"We've called your bluff," said Yerkes.

"You mean I'm to scuff du Maurier on his hilltop, single-handed?"

"No," said Montdidier. "It's not quite as bad as that. You're to go back and ask that chief for our mules. If they're gone, as we expect, send word up to Charles du Maurier, and ask him for them. If he doesn't answer, or refuses point blank, then go up and interview him in his lair, taking care to leave a good runner to bring us word.

"If you go alone, we don't think he'll kill you. It's a favorite trick of his to hold a prisoner to ransom. If he holds you to ransom, that gives us clear *casus belli* and will make his execution legal under Portuguese law. D'you see the point?"

"And if he shoots you, you're dead!" added Oakes.

"And we'll come and avenge you!" said America.

"But we don't believe he'll shoot," said Montdidier. "If you don't fancy the business, one of us will go. I assure you I'm not sending you on a mission I would not face myself."

"I believe that," I answered. "I'll go."

WE TALKED far into the night, but no amount of talking changed the plan much. Once or twice Oakes and Montdidier had qualms that the governor might find some way of canceling his bargain, once we had done our share. But they pulled out and read again the witnessed agreement, signed with the official seal, promising freehold title deeds as the price of our ridding the Libomba Hills of outlaws. It was plain enough—simple enough.

"It would take a Portuguese to get around it!" said Yerkes.

"Or a Hindu lawyer," added Montdidier.

"Or du Maurier himself!" laughed Oakes.

"Yes, what if we fail?" said I.

"I'll tell you what if we fail!" said Yerkes, placing his clenched fist on the table. "We all go down together if we fail! We'll none of us quit until we're each one done for. We'll not leave you scuppered."

"He understands that of course," said Montdidier, and then, on Montdidier's motion, we all went up to bed.

Next day, directly after breakfast, they sent me off, it being agreed that much the wisest course would be to give the enemy no time for preparation. Probably the du Mauriers had heard already through spies of our arrival in Lourenço Marques—or would hear within a day.

"Let's keep on the ball!" said Montdidier.

I did not see our Portuguese official member. He had not yet joined. They three stood and waved me farewells from the quay, having seen to it that I went off well provided, and as we steamed away

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under the lee of the long, sandy island that almost corks the neck of Delagoa Bay, they were the last three objects that I saw. They surely did look insignificant.

I was the only white passenger on that trip, although there were about two hundred natives on the lower deck, and, with nobody to talk to, and only the mysterious low-lying coast for view, the sheer absurdity of what we four were attempting forced itself on me, until I chuckled and was miserable in turns.

Rotten the Portuguese royal Government might be. Weak it might be. Stupid, inefficient, sordid, out-of-date, absurd it no doubt was. But it was the organized machine of a number of million people, and likely to prove more potent against outlaws than four foreigners could be. Alone, pacing the upper deck of that unclean tug I felt like a fool rushing in where armed authority had feared to tread.

I believe I would have reconsidered my decision, if I could have had the chance, at almost any time before the tug reached Chai Chai.

But as we wound and doubled on our track along the Limpopo's inconvenient course, Chai Chai hove at last in sight with its painted iron roofs, and acrid smell of barreled so-called wine, the sense of being afoot on high adventure came gradually back, and my three servants, looking up at me from the lower deck, divined enough of my rising spirits to grin and be noisy.

Chai Chai had no charms to hold any one but a money-grubber—and he not careful of the method. I had hired six porters to carry my tent and food, and was up and away from the place within an hour, wishful for one of Montdidier's mules; for on that steamy, smelly low veld there is none of the joy of setting foot to earth that walking on the high veld brings.

Knowledge that the only inducement my porters had for carrying my loads was a barrel of "wine" waiting for them in a Chai Chai factory, helped fire me with a fine self-righteous zeal, that, say what you like, has saved the day for many an adturer. It was pay-day for the local labor gangs. In sixes, eights, and tens they were clubbing to buy barrels of the fiery filth distilled in Portugal, and colored to resemble grape-juice. A barrel bought, they would tie it between poles and scamper off home with it; and that gang would not return to work until the stuff was finished, the drunk complete, and a burning new desire begun.

The men I got had been fined their whole month's pay for some real or imaginary fault, and jumped at a chance to avoid the next month's slavery and yet get drink. They would not listen to money offers. It was a case of *vino tinto* or no porters; so I had to leave their pay behind in the shape of an order for a full barrel to be surrendered to them only against a letter from me given at the journey's end.

Having made that trip before with Oakes, I had the distances in mind and could make fast going. I cut two days from the schedule, by starting early and continuing late, and though the porters suffered they did it eagerly for sake of the drunk in store, that every stride brought nearer.

We reached the kraal where Monty had sent the mules to be cared for at about half-past five one evening; and although natives loathe to travel at night-time, partly from fear of lions, partly from superstition, and also because of a theory that the night air makes them sick, my porters demanded their order for the barrel and were off like the wind at once.

That left me with my own three men and an appalling sense of helplessness—dependent on the good faith of a Shangan cook whom Monty had assigned as my interpreter. But Monty knows niggers as some men can judge tea, tobacco, horses, wine. That hideous black boy, with three toes missing from his right foot, and nostrils bigger than his eyes, held himself so far superior to any Ronga chief that insolence and undisguised enmity made no impression on him.

Shangans are descended from an *impi* of Chaka's beaten in battle, that did not dare go home; and to be a Zulu among South African natives is like being a tiger in the jungle. One simply is not aware of the claims of other natives to be anything but subordinate.

I sent for the chief, and he came to me, swaggering and smelly in his leopard-skin kaross, with half the kraal behind him to see me rebuked. My cook asked for milk—as civilly as any Shangan can compel himself to speak to any Ronga. There was no milk. A chicken. There were no

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chickens—although we could hear them clucking in a hut close by. Eggs. There were no eggs. No mention was made of mules yet.

"Sixpence"—that was the Shangan boy's name—his real one was unpronounceable, with three different clicks in it, and two vowels that are not written—carefully removed the rifle Monty had lent me from its japanned steel case, handed it to me, shook my pocket to make sure that I had cartridges, faced the chief again and—without anger—almost impersonally one might say—knocked him down. He had served British soldiers somewhere at some time, for the blow was straight from the shoulder with his weight behind it.

I expected instant reprisals, but I did not know in those days the extent of the low-veld respect for Zulu blood. The chief got up again, and a chicken was produced at once. Then a dozen eggs—all bad ones. Sixpence pelted him with the eggs, and then we permitted ourselves to be supplied with camping ground inside the kraal. It was not until our tents were pitched—a great, big, comfortable thing for me, and a tiny, narrow, single-topped affair for all three boys and kitchen, that I broached the subject of the mules.

The chief promptly denied all knowledge of the mules—said there never had been any; and if there had been, how should he know whose mules they were. He accused me of seeking to plant trouble on him—denied that he ever made a habit of accepting mules even as a gift, let alone in charge for anybody else.

He offered to let me search his kraal, and find mules if I could. How many mules was I looking for? Whose mules? Mine? If they were not mine, why should I look for them at all? Finally he turned his back on me, and went to his own great gloomy hut, to sulk and think up new evasions.

So, having eaten supper, I sent Sixpence after him, and in the pitchy blackness of African night, squatted by the little fire before my tent, he grew more communicative. It was as if the dusk had not been dark enough to hide his fear. He was not so afraid to tell the truth, now that a little shadowy circle about my fire seemed all there was left of the universe.

"Yaaow!" said Sixpence, translating. "He, the chief, say Charrlee come, an' him take mules."

"On whose authority?" I asked.

"He, the chief, say Charrlee big boss heah, not needing ask. He take. He saying give me. Who refuse?"

"Where are the mules now?" I demanded.

"He, the chief, say big boss Charrlee take them mules up along his place. You want to know where mules are now, you better ask Charrlee. Chief, he say no longer his affair."

"Are you afraid to go with a message to Charles du Maurier's place, Sixpence?" I asked.

"Yes!" he answered promptly. "Ja, boss!"

I sent the chief away, and invited Sixpence to tell me all he knew about du Maurier, but went to sleep at last scarcely any wiser. I gathered that du Maurier would shoot, knife, strangle or burn whomsoever, and whensoever he pleased; but I had guessed that much already. The only new discovery was that so far as native assistance was concerned when it came to tackling the dragon in his lair, I might as well look for St. George himself on horseback in shining armor.

MY THREE boys made no secret of their intentions. Sixpence cooked breakfast for me, and they all three sat and watched me eat it as if that were the last chance they expected to have of seeing that particular spectacle. Then Sixpence asked me whether I would take the rifle with me; and he looked visibly relieved when I said "No."

But I had thought that point out thoroughly in bed before dawn, and saw no reason to alter the decision, arguing that even the coldest-blooded ruffian would be less likely to fire on an unarmed man. I told Sixpence, if he should have need to bolt back to Montdidier with a message, to take the rifle with him.

Then I started, the three boys following me at a very discreet distance, and in less than thirty minutes I was standing on one of the parallelograms beneath which Monty and Oakes were so sure lay the wealth of Crœsus. I noticed there was a new shaft started. Then I saw that it was being worked, for a shovelful of dirt came flying over the edge.

I looked for Sixpence, to whistle him up and send him investigating, but he and the other two had vanished like yesterday.

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A minute later a nigger crawled out of the new hole—then another one—and then another. Then came Charles du Maurier himself, rifle in hand, giving the impression of having drunk too much overnight.

He was an awful-looking brute—thick-necked, round-headed—heavy of build, and swart, with a cold blue eye that seemed to know nothing of mercy. But he seemed to know no fear, either, and he did not hesitate before walking toward me. Nor did he trouble to threaten me with his rifle, but carried it slung over his right shoulder.

"Saow!" he snarled, grinning with what he imagined was good humor. "Here's my young friend that was braoke a while agao in Lourenço Marques. Well, I'm bloody well ——! So you've deserted the Montdidier aoutfit, have you, an' decided to come to me after all? Eh? Know which side your bread an butter's jammed on, don't yer, after all? So you've come to join me, eh?"

"I've come to ask you for those mules," I answered, dangerously close to anger.

The most revolting thing about the brute was his insolent assumption that any one with manhood left in him could think of choosing his camp in preference to that of Montdidier and Oakes.

"Mules?" he said. "What mules?"

"Lord Montdidier's mules," said I.

"Haow do you know where the mules are?" he demanded.

"Never mind how I know," I said. "I know."

"You think they're up at my place, eh?"

"I know it," said I.

"—— of a lot you know, don't you!"

I could see he was turning over in his methodically vicious mind the pros and cons of an unexpected situation. He had yellow mud from the digging on his knees and boots—mud on his hands—mud even on his face, and it heightened, if anything, the suggestion of indifference to other human life. It was as if he had come from burying a victim—supposing that such a cynic ever took that trouble.

"You think these claims are Montdidier's, don't you? Well, they ain't, they're mine! I own this country! I'm king o' these hills and the low veld under them! There's gaold here, and it's all mine! Say, who the —— are you anyway, to come here and dictate to me?"

The last thing I wanted was to be shot out of hand, and though the temptation to strike him, or to give him a peppery answer was almost overwhelming, I contrived to keep calm. My business was to give my party *casus belli*. There was no more need for me to die than for the bullock that is tied under a tree at night to bait a lion; nor yet necessarily any greater risk.

"I'm Lord Montdidier's friend," I said, "charged by him to recover his mules. And keep watch on his claims," I added as an afterthought."

The new, cold light in du Maurier's eye betrayed that he had seen the right plan. He no longer hesitated for a second, and he lied as instantly and calmly as another man would breathe.

"Oh, all right, then," he answered. "The claims are mine. I'll sell at my price—reasonable. You tell Lord Montdidier that! But mules—who's crazy enough to think, by ——, that I'd steal mules? What should I want with mules? I've plenty of my own. You think his mules are up at my place? Well, you're wrong. But don't take my word for it. Come along up and I'll show you."

"Very well," I said, "I'd like to see your roost."

He leered at me with an expression that would have made a fox's seem guileless by comparison. The men who act like brutes unconsciously wear brutal masks—I have marked that a hundred times. His face was heavy, round, and dark, yet during the days that followed some swift, slight change made it suggest to me the features of at least a dozen different animals.

"Go ahead!" he said, shouldering his rifle.

"No," said I. "Do you remember telling me on Kilo One in Lourenço Marques that when one man has a rifle the other should walk behind him?"

He laughed—and looked like a hyena.

"I see you've a memory. You and I'll get on all right," he grinned. "Can you shoot a bird with a pistol? Let's see you shoot that weaver bird—see—that one—quick! Shoot him before he's gone."

"I've no pistol," I answered, and he laughed again.

"Which are you—too innocent to walk alone," he asked, "or just rash?"

"I'm looking for mules, not murder," I answered, starting to walk behind him,

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and praying with all the concentrated fervor I could summon that Sixpence might have me in view from some hiding-place, and might be faithful and swift.

I knew there was a way overland to Lourenço Marques, and supposed he would take it; but I knew, too, that it went through swamps and down along the Nkomati River, and what thousand obstacles might lie in the way to delay or prevent him I could only guess. Knowing something of the swamps, imagination was not comforting.

We climbed up the face of the cliff by a goat track that would have kept goats in splendid exercise. There was a very steep, winding wagon road that we crossed and crossed again, but du Maurier despised it. Aboard ship I had been able to run aloft as actively as any member of the crew, and English school and college training produces men of rather sound wind, able to use both hands and feet; yet that low-living, middle-aged ruffian went up the cliff so fast, jumping and striding from foothold to ledge without ever troubling to reach a hand out to recover his balance, that he distanced me by more than a minute. At the top I was blowing, whereas he stood breathing calmly, smiling at me with a sort of cold amusement.

"How d'you like the look o' my nest?" he asked, almost before I had time to look about me.

The path had led over the edge of a great rock wall, but the wagon road entered a shallow depression at the very apex of the hill by a gate built of squared stone and heavy timber. The whole fort—for such it was—was about two acres in extent and by standing on the surrounding rim one could see to the horizon on both sides, and everything between. At one point I could see the Limpopo River, where it snaked toward us through the heat-haze in one of its long, hairpin bends.

In the center of the cup was du Maurier's own house, a square concern of timber and corrugated iron, with a pole on top supporting a lookout platform. Behind it, in a more or less straight line, was a row of sheds—stores—stables—three wagons, carefully oiled and painted—and a stack of hay. In front, in a spaced-out semi-circle there were fourteen thatch-roofed huts, whose purpose I guessed from rumor, but did not actually know as yet.

There were additional buildings here and there around the inner rim of the depression, the roof of one of which we had just been able to see from below; and a very peculiar wooden post, whose purpose I did not suspect, was planted firmly in the ground about twenty feet in front of the house veranda. The ground all about it was trampled flat.

"IT LOOKS like a comfortable place," said I.

"You bet it's comfortable! You better hope it's comfortable!" he snarled, grinning, and slapping his rifle butt. "You see that shed? That's where Lord Montdidier's mules are. You see that other shed—the stone one without a window? That's where you'll stay on quarter rations if you don't behave! Now you're here, you're here until your friends redeem you! If they don't redeem you——"

He paused, to enjoy my discomfort.

"If they don't redeem me, as you call it, what then?" I asked, deadly curious.

"D'you remember my telling you that time we met on Kilo One in Lourenço Marques about the way of recruiting white men to boss the slave-gangs in Angola? They get some from the jails—sneak 'em by night aboard coasting steamers. But they get some from me. Many a white man I've sent in a boat down the Nkomati River to be thrown aboard a coaster in Delagoa Bay. I get a good price. Your friends 'ud better redeem you quick."

I was soon to learn what the post was for, with the dry earth trampled all about it. He bade me follow to his veranda, and sit beside him in a canvas steamer chair. For a while he smoked in silence, watching the black women and colored children who sunned themselves and were more or less busy about the huts. Then several natives entered the arena through the wagon gate and came toward us with no apparent eagerness. They lined up, seven of them, in front of the veranda, the whites of their eyes showing as they looked anywhere but at du Maurier.

"Well?" he snarled at last. "Where are they? Where are the three niggers who came with this white man?" And since none of them answered he repeated the question savagely in Chironga.

They began an explanation, but he cut them short with an oath.

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"Yaow, you swine! You've let 'em get away from you, that's what! I'll teach you! Fetch that sjambok out! Quick, now! No argument!"

He whistled an enormous Zulu from one of the huts, and without as much as asking for instructions the Zulu seized the nearest trembling wretch by the arm, dragged him to the pole, and lashed him there by both hands in such a way that he could dance about the pole but could not fall. Then he flogged him until the blood ran down back, flanks, and legs, using a hippo-hide sjambok more than a yard long.

"Stop!" ordered du Maurier, when the poor wretch fainted. "No use flogging 'em," he said to me, "when the fools can't feel it. "Now the next one!" he ordered.

So the first victim was unleashed and dragged aside, and one by one the others took their torture, until each fainted and du Maurier gave the word "*Longueza*"—that'll do.

When the last one lay unconscious on the trampled earth he filled his pipe leisurely and watched native women come from the huts and drag the victims all away.

"My wives," he said, with an air of being communicative and good-natured. "Black wives for me, my boy! They do as they're told, and you can have as many of 'em as you're minded. Speaking of flogging, though—I don't believe in flogging a white man, not if there's any other way, but the Portuguese—my word, the Portuguese! If your friends don't come and ransom y u, and you get sold to the Portuguese for their West Coast plantations, you'll know what flogging means. What you've just seen my niggers get'll be child's play to what the Portuguese'll serve out to you."

I made no comment, and tried not to seem gloomy, but the thought was borne in on me with galling persistence that I had ventured into this trap on no better guarantee than a few weeks' acquaintance with two Englishmen, and a few days' acquaintance with an American.

However brave and honorable these new friends of mine might be, it seemed to me in that hour that I had been every particular species of fool to trust them so implicitly, and depend so entirely on their ability to win where a Government had failed. I think du Maurier divined part at least of my feelings, for he laughed to himself and seemed to enjoy life thoroughly.

We ate stew cooked for us by his wives, and then, while we sat again on the veranda, there was a new diversion. A native entered through the wagon gate, whom I recognized as having been the cabin boy of the Limpopo River steamer. He carried a letter addressed very plainly to me, but offered it to du Maurier, who broke the seal without a second's hesitation. He read it first to himself, and then, grinning, aloud to me.

"From Lord Montdidier," he said. "He's crazy. First the —— fool supposes the captain o' that steamer isn't my stool-pigeon. Then he supposes I'm alone without allies. Hear what he says:

" 'We shall leave here on the fourteenth day from today—' that means he'll start in about nine days from now, don't it?—'and in case you've had any trouble with that man du Maurier about the mules we'll take the precaution of bringing with us a Portuguese official, who can settle up about our claims at the same time. Have had a long talk with several prominent officials here, who all assure me there will be no trouble with du Maurier, and no need for offensive tactics. But, in case he should decide to defy us, the Portuguese member of our party, and perhaps a couple of police, and ourselves will be sufficient to bring him to his senses. Meanwhile, please watch the claims, and see that nobody pulls our pegs up.—Montdidier.

" 'P. S.—In order to be sure of getting the upper hand of du Maurier, we have determined to take him by surprise, and have exacted a pledge from the steamer company not to disclose to any one the date of our intended return to Chai Chai. So you would better burn this letter as soon as you have read it.'

"Yah-hah-hah-hah!" du Maurier yelled, shaking the letter up and down. "There's a —— fool for you. There's an intelligent English lord. That's tactics, them are. This lord o' yours is a strategian, by ——. Nine days, eh? Tonight if I summoned 'em—eleven of my brothers and five cousins 'ud be in the kraal o' mine ready to defend it against any one. I'd have 'em here now in advance o' time if they weren't such untamed devils o' hell. I've got my wives to think of. Never fear, I'll have 'em here in lots o' time for Mister Lord Montdidier and his one or two police.

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You just hope he brings money with him when he comes—else it's West Coast for you."

He was in splendid humor, increased by my obvious discouragement; for I could not for the life of me see any point to Montdidier's letter. It did occur to me several times that it might be a ruse to throw du Maurier off his guard, but the point was drawn from that hope by reflection that the steamer captain would certainly warn du Maurier in advance of any move Montdidier could make, and I walked about his kraal beside the scoundrel, watching and listening to his management, with a feeling that suicide would be the only tolerable outcome.

At night he sat up, drinking, and I got new insight into his psychology. There were two rooms to his frame house, separated only by a curtain on a rod, and a strong man could have kicked his way through any of the sides without much trouble; but he showed me a trestle bed to which I might retire whenever I saw fit, and told off four strong natives to keep watch all night beside me, making escape unimaginable, for the threat he made of flaying them alive if they let me get away was too sure of fulfilment to be risked.

I lay on the bed for a time, but could not lie still, so got up again, and sat in a Windsor chair across the table from him. He had a small-bore rifle across his knees that I supposed was intended to awe me, until he disillusioned me by showing the big Colt revolver he kept in his pocket on my account.

"I always have a little sport here, nights," he said with a grin. "Sportsman, that's what I am. Can't live without sport—have to have some every day to keep my hand and eye in."

There were two lamps—smoky kerosene affairs, one on the table between us, and one hung on the wall in a metal bracket. Otherwise I would have doused the light and had a try to strangle him. The shadows danced and shifted as the lamp-flames flickered in the draft, and any more unlikely spot for rifle-shooting could not have been imagined. Yet he kept the rifle, loaded, over his knees in readiness, with a handful of cartridges loose on the table at his side. And presently, as we ceased talking and all grew quiet, the manner of his evening sport was shown me.

"THERE goes one!" he whispered, and the rifle left his knees.

A piece of three-by-four ran all around the inside of the house at about eighteen inches from the top. The lights being lower, the three-by-four threw a shadow upward, and between it and the next timber where wall and roof met was pitchy darkness. His eyes were on that, but I saw nothing.

"Don't you see him?" he asked.

As I did not answer, he fired, and a great black rat fell with a thud to the floor.

"Bring it here," he ordered, and one of the boys told off to watch me carried it to him by the tail.

"Ya-ha-ha-ha!" he yelled in a sort of bestial frenzy. "There's a great black swine for you. There's a whale of a rat. Shot him plop through the head, too. —— his eyes. Did you see his eyes? His beady little black eyes, squinting down at us? Yah-hah! He thought I didn't see him. Did I see him? Eh? Look out, there's another one."

For hours he shot rats, gloating over each one as a nigger held it up by the tail for inspection, and he certainly made most remarkable shooting. Nor did he seem to tire of the amusement. When the cartridges were used up he went and produced more from an old trunk.

"No gentleman should grudge expense when it comes to sport," he assured me. Having a good time, ain't we, eh? Don't you consider I treat a prisoner pretty decent, amusing him like this, instead of shutting him in a dark hole?"

I assured him his kindness was astonishing.

"But mark you," he snarled, in one of his lightning changes of manner, crashing his clenched fist down on the table until the lamp nearly danced itself out. "Play any dog's tricks on me and I'll treat you like a dog. I'm kind, I am—kind an' considerate; but I'm no man's fool. You beware."

He lay down to sleep at last with his pistol in his right hand, and the little rifle locked away. So I lay down too, for the four natives came and sat so close beside me that the sensation of being watched grew intolerable. When I lay on the bed they were satisfied to squat two at each end of it and I could only hear their breathing, which was better.

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At about two in the morning the lights gave out for lack of oil, and the smell of the smoldering wicks was added to the unforgetable kraal smell and the individual personal aroma of my guards. Nevertheless, I am sure I slept, although lightly. Sure of the guards, and heavy from the gin he had drunk in tumbler doses, du Maurier slept deeply.

It was dawn that awakened me—the first, cold, dim false-flickering of dawn; but something else that made the gooseflesh rise all up and down my skin. My guards were squatted still at either end of the bed, sleepy, but still faithfully watching me—seeing nothing but me—conscious of nothing but the need of pouncing on me if I tried to get away.

It was a face at the window that stopped my heart beating, and for a moment froze my veins. I could only see it dimly. It was stock still, and I thought I could distinguish a rifle-barrel held up beside it.

There were three windows. I looked at the second, moving nothing but my eyes. There was a face there too, and a rifle.

I looked at the third. There, too, was a face.

My eyes went back to window number one, that faced me as I lay; and as the shock wore off, and the false light strengthened, I saw that the face was no black man's. It was one I did not know—yellow, with a dark mustache and a suggestion of imperial.

"Du Maurier's brothers!" I muttered, and turned over face to the wall in disgust. So, in the fraction of a second that followed, I did not see all that took place.

There came a sudden crash on the door like an explosion, and it burst inward, splintered to bits. My four guards pounced on me and pinned me to the bed, using the blanket more effectually to smother my struggles. I heard du Maurier leap from bed like an avalanche, and the bark of his Colt revolver followed, twice in swift succession.

Through the one window I could see, as I struggled to free myself, the yellow face with the mustache and imperial still stared, almost motionless. I made a spasmodic effort that loosed my captors' hold, and before they could recover it saw du Maurier fire point-blank three times at the face—and miss.

"So much for Hollands by the tumblerful at midnight," thought I.

He only had one shot left, and he fired again. It seemed he hit that time, for the face disappeared. But whose face?

I saw du Maurier reach for cartridges, and wondered whether my turn would not come next. He would almost surely shoot me, I thought, rather than take the chance of losing me. But a voice that I already knew too well to mistake among a thousand—calm, suave, gentlemanly, without a trace of bravado or brag—put a sudden end to that climax, only to produce another one.

"Your game is played. You are covered from four sides. If you put your hands up you shall not be hung without trial."

MY GUARDS fell off me—wrenched off me, I discovered, and I sat up, to see Lord Montdidier with one foot on the splintered door, covering du Maurier with a rifle, and Yerkes the American grinning at me with my blanket in his hand. He had knocked my guards down, for they were sprawling on the floor in four directions.

"Not hurt, I hope?" Montdidier asked, sparing a glance in my direction.

"Look out, Monty, you —— fool!" a voice shouted through the window—another voice I knew well. "That nigger America knocked down last is crawling to get you by the leg. Stand aside and give me a shot at him."

But Yerkes ran forward instead, and kicked the Kaffir's wind out, merciful after a swift fashion of his own.

"How would you like to go and tie that rascal's hands behind him?" Montdidier asked.

So I hunted a rope; and sea-training stood me in good stead, for in two minutes I had du Maurier so trussed that he was helpless. Then a voice called through the doorway.

"You-ah have eem, eh? It ees, ah, safe to enter now?"

"Yes, come along in, Senhor Cadji."

Montdidier, with his eye still on du Maurier, sat down, and through the doorway together with the first yellow rays of real morning Oakes and a Portuguese official entered side by side.

"Didums, you've got no luck." Oakes nodded to me, looked swiftly about him, and sat down too. "If that brute had only refused to surrender we could have

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shot him and had done with the job. Ough! Who wants to hang him?"

"Oh, as for that," said Senhor Cadji, "the law will run its course in regular manner. But eet will be wise to hasten affairs. This man has brothers—cousins—nephews—uncles—what not. They will come."

"Let's try him, then, and get the job done," growled Oakes.

"Not until after breakfast," said Montdidier; and nobody found fault with that.

He had scarcely said it when Sixpence entered, with a huge and hideous grin for me, and began to spread a white cloth on the only table.

"But wasn't somebody shot?" I asked. "A man with a mustache? Who was at that window?"

"I," said Yerkes.

"But I saw a man with a mustache and imperial shot in the face and collapse."

They all laughed.

"I saw it," said I.

"Go and look," said Montdidier, and I went outside.

In another moment I was laughing too.

By each of the windows was a gourd, stuck on a short stick, and decorated with the crudely moulded features of a man. The first one I picked up had no less than four great holes through it, where du Maurier's soft-nosed expanding bullets had torn their way through.

"There'd have been a fine fat chance of my eating breakfast this morning if I'd pushed my head above that window-sill instead of the pumpkin, eh?" said Yerkes, looking through the window. "It was Monty's idea."

"So you're on good enough terms to be calling him that?" I asked, with a distinct twinge of jealousy.

"Yes," he said, "Monty and I are friends."

Then he came through the door and joined me.

"Gee!" he said, drawing me out of earshot of the house. "I'd hate to horn in again and offer objections. That man Monty's a prince, and I believe he means to hang the prisoner. He'll be right. It's nothing but sentiment that makes me loathe doing it—sickly sentiment. Still—I hate it."

"How about the Portuguese official, Senhor Cadji?" I asked; but he shook his head.

"He'll take the credit for anything we do—that is all."

Montdidier came striding out.

"Did you get my letter?" he asked; and I told him.

"How did you come so soon on the heels of it, and so secretly?" said I.

"The navy man. He couldn't commit his Government or lend us any men. But he sent us up-river in his launch, with a bosun who showed us a short cut to this place that avoided Chai Chai. That Portuguese navy man is like most others of his calling—a good sportsman."

"Didums!" said Oakes, coming out after us, "I think you're a —— fool to leave that brute in charge of the Portuguee."

"Rot!" said Montdidier. "Come with us and look the place over before breakfast."

"Come and look at his wives," said I. "And the men he thrashed yesterday; and our mules. The sight of the men he thrashed may give us more stomach for hanging him."

Having followed du Maurier all about the place the day before, I made a good guide, and showed them as much in twenty minutes as they could have discovered without me in two hours. Suddenly, as we went for a second look at the mules, Oakes nudged Montdidier and shouted:

"There. What did I say? Look at that, now. That Portugoose of ours has let the blackguard go."

The "Portugoose" was sitting contemplative on the threshold, studiously oblivious. With his arms still lashed behind him—for I had done that job of work Bristol fashion—du Maurier sprang from the window as we looked up, and made at top speed for the notch in the rim of the kraal where the goat path led over to the plain below, Sixpence and all our other boys in noisy, albeit cautious pursuit.

"Well, anyway, we'll have to shoot him now," said Oakes, and we all made after him as fast as we could run.

"Don't shoot yet," I panted, for I knew that steep path he had headed for.

"Why not?" demanded Oakes.

"Wait and see," said I.

"There'll be lots of time," said Yerkes.

He gained the rim thirty seconds ahead of us, and by the time they three had thrown themselves down to get a bead on him, and I had sprung on a rock to get a better view, he was already fifty feet on

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the way down, leaping from ledge to ledge, from precarious foothold to monkey-grip.

"Don't shoot yet," said I, for I foresaw the outcome.

Once, when he crossed the wagon track he made as if to follow that, and then we should have been obliged to shoot; but he looked up, saw the three rifles pointed at him, and chose the swifter, more dangerous way, leaping—leaping—gaining momentum—at each spring less able to check himself—unable, without the use of arms, to regain balance when he overshot the mark—and at last out of all control, flying downward like something flung from the summit.

He hit a rock with one foot, kicked himself clear of it, began to rotate face-forward like a wheel, and presently was brainless, beaten to a pulp, crushed, dead and done for—still rotating—still hurtling downward. We heard the sickening thud as his carcass brought up at last at the foot of the cliff.

Then a wail went up—a horrible, shrill wail. Unseen by us, his women had come and had watched his fall, from the rim to either hand of where we stood. They cried as if the hero of a thousand splendid deeds had met an unworthy end, beating their breasts and shaking themselves in wordless misery, their little brown-and-yellow brats clinging to them and adding flat cries to the sharp inharmony. And that noise brought the Portugoose.

"He is dead?" said he. "He is already dead? No need of any trial, or any hanging? That is good, then. So I go."

We all looked at him, all, I think, wondering what to say yet none in doubt what to do about it.

"You're the Government official in charge of this kraal," said Montdidier at last. "You're in charge of these women, for instance, and all this property. You stay."

"But the others will come," said Senhor Cadji, "hees brothers—hees cousins—hees nephews—very many."

"Exactly!" said Montdidier. "You'll stay to see the fun. Let's have breakfast—eh? What?" he said, turning to the rest of us.

"It seems I'm everlastingly horning in," said Yerkes, "but haven't we business with this man first?" He nodded in my direction.

"Right you are, America!" said Oakes. "Monty, you —— enigma, tell him. Me tell him? Oh, very well. Your proposal of yourself as a member of this party on shares like the rest of us has been seconded, voted on, and passed."

"My proposal?" I said. "I've never thought of it—let alone——"

"You proposed yourself," said Yerkes, "by volunteering to come up here alone. We did the rest. Now, who's hungry?"

"Oh, and by the way," said Lord Montdidier, striding along beside me, and handing his rifle to a boy, "I'd be awfully glad if you'd cut ceremony, and call me Monty or some such thing. Will you? Thanks. Come on you men, let's eat!"

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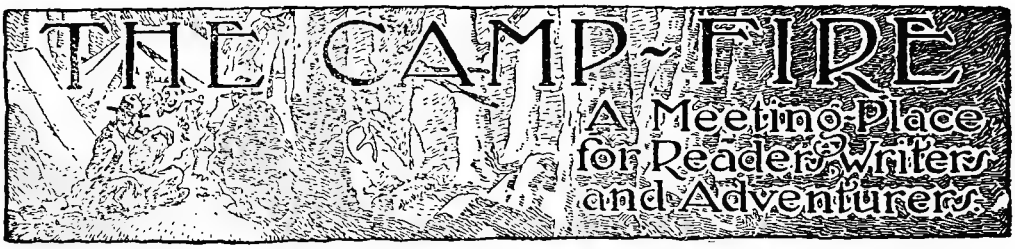

DANIEL BOONE. That is a name to conjure by for any American who has ever been a boy. Most of us turned our kid hero-worship on Boone at one period or another. But it's only when we grow up that we realize Boone was a figure of great national importance, playing a tremendous part in the winning of a continent.

Hugh Pendexter's novelette in this issue gives us a living picture of Boone and of the early days when Kentucky was "the dark and bloody ground," a critical turning-point in the expansion of our country from a few seaboard colonies to a great nation. If as a story it interests you as much as it did me, you'll have a good time reading it. If you learn as much American history from it as I did, you'll pick up quite a little without any effort.

For our benefit Mr. Pendexter supplies some of the historical facts and conditions in and back of the tale itself.

Norway, Maine.

I've tried to give a picture of life at Boonesborough when Dan'l Boone stood off Shawnees and Wyandots. In 1777 Boone and Simon Kenton, second to none except Boone, did many hair-raising stunts. It was starvation time for Kentucky, and the two often sneaked out at night and traveled long distances, sometimes as far as fifty miles, before daring to bag game.

OF COURSE my first desire was to tell an interesting yarn; secondly, to make Boone a human being with the historic peaks of his achievements forming a background and revealing how this great pioneer was a true American when Americanism was in the making. In doing this I must not only show what Kentucky endured, dared and suffered, as personified by Boone, Kenton, Jim Harrod, *et al.*, but also play up what Kentucky stood for. It was the hinge on which swung George Rogers Clark's conquest of the Ohio country; it was the outer bulwark on which split all attempts to divide the Colonies and to lose for future America the whole interior of the continent. In this Boone recital I've fought against the inclination to think of fiction plot first and have presented a continuity of action on Boone's part that parallels fact. This at the expense of a cut and dried plot. The restrictions in the Boone story were arbitrary as he was a man of 43, a great defensive rather than an offensive fighter, constantly passing back and forth between the Yadkin and Kentucky, with the exceptions of 1777—78, the time of the present story.

BOONE spelled it "Cantuck." As he was unlettered and spelled phonetically I have assumed he called it that; much as other old-timers said "Kentuck." Regarding the "prodigal" supplies of munitions possessed by the Indians it is said Boone's men picked up 125 pounds of lead at the foot of the stockade after one siege, and estimated that as much more was buried in the stockade timbers. An attempt to mine the fort was made in 1778 under the direction of Lieut. De Quindre. The muddy streak in the water betrayed this maneuver and a counter-mine was started. I have placed the incident in 1777 for fiction purposes.

An ancient and hollow sycamore figured in Boone's early Kentucky adventures. His brother-in-law, John Stewart, his companion on Boone's first visit to Kentucky, disappeared after the two had gone through many exciting adventures, including capture by Indians. Five years later Boone found human bones and a powder-horn bearing Stewart's name in an old sycamore.

Before Boone was old enough to have a rifle, or less than twelve years old, and was living near what is now Reading, Pa., he became an adept in throwing sapling roots, trimmed into clubs. Boone spelled his name "Boon." Roosevelt follows this form in his "Winning of the West."

TATAHECASSA, or "Black Hoof," was about 37 years old at this time. Born near what is now Winchester, Ky. He was principal chief of the Shawnees and one of their greatest war captains at a time when they were at their zenith as fighters. History places him in the fighting at Braddock's Defeat in 1755—a very youthful warrior—and he was conspicuous at the battle of Point Pleasant, mouth of the Kanawha, 1774, when Lord Dunmore's troops whipped the northern Indians. He led the Shawnees in persistently opposing the white advance west of the Allegheny Mountains and fought against Harmar and St. Clair. After Wayne's victory over the northwestern Indians he continued famous as orator and used his great influence to preserve peace, realizing his people's cause was hopeless. Due to his efforts the bulk of the Shawnee tribe refused to join Tecumseh in his war against the United States. He died at Wapakoneta, Auglaize County, Ohio, in 1831.

Kenton's use of the shamanistic language of the Cherokees, *viz.*, "Black Spirits" and "Red War Club," would be perfectly appreciated by the Shawnees because of their former intimacy with

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the Cherokees. "Red" was symbolic for strength and victory among all Indian tribes, just as it was an emblem for power and success among Oriental peoples.

Unlita, a Cherokee chief. His name is translated by Mooney "(He is) long-winded." Called "The Breath" by the whites.

BOONE cut the Wilderness Road (Trace) for the Transylvania Land Co., commencing work in March, 1775, from the Holston settlements. The course lay in as straight a line as possible to Cumberland Gap. The real difficulties began after reaching the Rockcastle River in Kentucky. The Road made for the Blue Grass Region near the junction of the Kentucky and Otter Creek and encountered a stretch of dead brushwood, impenetrable even to buffalo. Necessary to chop and burn every foot of the way for twenty miles before emerging on plains covered with white clover. While engaged in this work Boone was joined by fifty men, including Abraham Hanks, grandfather of Abraham Lincoln, and Benjamin Logan, celebrated Indian fighter and builder of Logan's Fort.

The caves of Kentucky were often used for mortuary purposes by the Indians, the dry air reducing the dead to mummified forms. They were also used as hiding-places to escape pursuit, but seldom, if ever, for dwellings.

"Nolichucky" Jack Sevier, also called "Chucky" Jack, with James Robertson, laid the foundations of the State of Tennessee six years before Kentucky was opened. He was prominent in defense of the Watauga settlements, in Lord Dunmore's war and throughout the Indian wars of the Revolution. He was the first governor of Tennessee, serving six terms.

"NIGHT-GOERS," Cherokee for "witches." According to the Cherokee belief they could be destroyed by planting four sharpened stakes at the corners of a house and by puffing tobacco smoke towards every trail leading to the house. The stakes flew up and in descending impaled the witch.

The Cherokee offer of white wampum, "showing one dish," was meant literally. One dish, picked out in the pattern, signified the two nations were as one and ate from the same dish. In describing the war medicine as made by the shamans, I have followed the sacred formula of the Cherokees as set forth by Mr. James Mooney, an eminent authority on that and many other matters pertaining to the red men. Mr. Mooney says that almost every man of the 300 East Cherokees participating in the rebellion went to water and chewed the charmed root, and adds: "And it is but fair to state that not more than two or three out of the entire number were wounded in actual battle."

There is much more to the sacred formula for destroying life than can be given in the scope of a story. To be exact the shaman must see his victim and spy upon him until he could procure some of his spittle. Mooney says this idea regarding spittle is found also in European folk-lore medicine. The spittle is put into a tube of wild parsnip, together with seven earthworms and a bit of a lightning-riven tree, and then buried in a hole at the foot of a lightning-blasted tree. Seven yellow pebbles are placed on top, and on them a fire is built to conceal all signs. Then the shaman can pull off the ceremony of the red and black beads as shown in the story. Boone's use of the formula for finding that which is lost closely follows the formula.

A RUNAWAY slave served with the Shawnees in the 1776 campaign against Boonesborough. He was an expert rifle shot and did much "sniping" from tree-tops overlooking the stockade until Boone brought him down.

According to all authentic personal data concerning Boone he was a poor swimmer. That the incident of Boone's shooting two Indians with one bullet may not be considered overdrawn it is recorded as a fact that while on his way to upper Blue Lick in 1779 he was fired upon by Indians in ambush. He crossed the creek and stole through the cane, found two in line, and at one shot killed one and wounded the other.

It is believed that none of the southern tribes used salt until the coming of the whites (Dr. Walter Hough, U. S. Nat. Museum, in article printed in Bulletin 30, B. A. E.). But the Shawnees were famous salt-makers. The Virginia Indians as well as the Cherokees used lye. Some tribes believed the use of salt caused sore eyes. (Same authority as above.)

BOONE broke his leg while fighting outside the stockade during the 1777 siege. Kenton rescued him after killing three Indians, carried him to the fort, and then returned for more fighting.

The capture of Boone, while directing thirty salt-makers at lower Blue Lick, his leading the Indians to the camp where his companions surrendered, is history. After his escape from captivity Boone was brought before a court martial at Logan's Fort on the charge of surrendering his men without a struggle. He was not only honorably acquitted, but as an additional mark of commendation for the course he had pursued he was advanced to the rank of major in the Continental army. James and George Girty, brothers of the malodorous Simon, were at the camp when he was captured. The whole story follows history rather closely, the vote at Chillicothe on the fate of the prisoners being fifty-nine for torture and sixty-one for ransom.

Boone not only won the good will of his captors but succeeded in making Hamilton believe he would turn Tory. He was forced to play this card in order to escape the Indians. The lieutenant-governor in vain offered a hundred pounds sterling for him. Black Fish's refusal to accept this price evidences how successful the prisoner had been in disarming the suspicions of the Shawnees.

Boone accumulated a reserve supply of ammunition as described in the story. On returning from each hunting trip the amount of game bagged checked up, to the Indians' satisfaction, the number of shots fired. Boone's fear of torture should he be recaptured was natural to one who understood the Indian character as he did. To the Indian mind nothing could be more abhorrent than for an adopted son to cut up like this. It was about the most cussed thing he could do. Nor is his race to save Boonesborough to be belittled.

BLACK BIRD, chief of the Chippewas, afterward lined up with the American forces. History sometimes neglects to play up the part played by the red men during the Revolution and places over-emphasis on the employment of redskins by the British. We used Injuns when we

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could get 'em, and we got lots of them. They were our allies as much as allies of the British, only we called them "friendly" Indians. Those on the other side were "red devils," eke other hard sounding names.

Where Black Fish led his warriors across the Kentucky, panting to carve up his son Dan'l, was afterward known as Black Fish Ford, and may be to this day for aught I know.

BOONE'S finish would be pathetic if not for the lasting homage posterity has paid him. When about seventy years of age he lost his land grants in Kentucky, some ten thousand acres, through inefficiency in "business" matters. Still vigorous, he moved to Missouri and took up ten thousand acres, and again, because of ignorance of certain legal formalities, was stripped of his holdings. Then he turned to Kentucky and asked for aid and the State petitioned Congress, and once more the grand old pioneer was given title to ten thousand acres. It would seem he had learned but little of white men's wiles, although second to but few in understanding the red man. Litigation sent him landless to his grave; and he had helped win a continent! His Wilderness Road was the beginning of the road across the continent.

SIMON KENTON was hated more intensely, perhaps, by the Indians rambling round in Kentucky than any other white man. He was not a home-builder like Boone, but an awful meddler in affairs of the reds.

If the dense forests gave Indians and sudden onslaughts to the pioneers it also gave (to those who survived) the true spirit of democracy. Reckon that's what the forests were for, to instil democracy. Otherwise the All Supreme would have had the land growing up to boarding-houses. All the basic values this country possesses hark back to the woods, the conquest of which brought so much hardship and suffering, and (to be guilty in a bromide-degree) reminds us eternally that whatever is worth winning must be dearly paid for. Those behind us paid for it; it's up to us to keep it.—HUGH PENDEXTER.

As I was born and raised on the Scioto and later lived so close to the Miami that I could sit at my window and shoot turtles, I became skeptical when Mr. Pendexter in his story located Chillicothe on the Miami instead of the Scioto, the present town of that name being indisputably on the Scioto. The following will satisfy the doubts of any other Ohioans as they did mine.

Also I couldn't remember ever having seen the Northern Lights in Ohio, but I'm far from sure.

It's a historical fact that Boone was held prisoner at Chillicothe on the Little Miami. The accompanying excerpt will clear it up for you, I'm sure. And it might easily be that a modern town takes an old Indian name while located nowhere near the site of the Indian village. It happens that one of the four towns called Chillicothe, was, according to Mr. Mooney, "probably called" etc. But there is no doubt as to the Chillicothe on the Little Miami.

FROM "Handbook American Indians," Smithsonian Institution. page 267—68, vol. I. Chillicothe:—"One of the four tribal divisions of the Shawnees. The division is still recognized in the tribe, but the meaning of the word is lost. The Chillicothe always occupied a village of the same name, and this village was regarded as the chief town of the tribe. As the Shawnee retreated west before the whites, several villages of this name were successively occupied and abandoned. The old Lowertown, or Lower Shawnee Town, at the mouth of the Scioto, in Ohio, was probably called Chillicothe. Besides this there were three other villages of that name in Ohio, viz:

(1) On Paint Creek on the site of Oldtown, near Chillicothe, in Ross Co. This village may have been occupied by the Shawnee after removing from Lowertown. It was there as early as 1774, and was destroyed by the Kentuckians in 1778.

(2) On the Little Miami, about the site of Oldtown, in Green Co. The Shawnee are said to have removed from Lowertown to this village, but it seems more probable that they went to the village on Paint Creek. This village near Oldtown was frequently called Old Chillicothe, and Boone was a prisoner there in 1778. It was destroyed by Clark in 1780.

(3) On the (Great) Miami, at the present Piqua, in Miami Co.; destroyed by Clark in 1782. (James Mooney, B. A. E.)"

IN "Boone and the Wilderness Road," by Bruce Addington, or Addlington (I haven't the volume at hand but the title is correct. I am a bit hazy as to author's name), the author says Boone was sent with a small detachment of Shawnee to make salt "on a lick on the Scioto." In notes from other authorities I have more on this, but can't lay my hand to them. Another of their licks, I remember, was a large saline spring on Saline Creek in Ohio, below mouth of Walnut Creek.

In re Northern Lights. I think it was Parkman, among others, in writing of Iroquois Indians, who spoke of Northern lights being ghosts according to northern Indians' belief. The belief was general wherever the northern lights could be seen and I assumed they could be glimpsed occasionally in Ohio.—HUGH PENDEXTER.

DON'T forget to be sending in your vote for the ten best stories in ADVENTURE during 1918. If you like, add a list of another ten for honorable mention as you did for 1917 and 1916.

HER collaborator, Louise Rice, has already followed Camp-Fire custom and introduced herself to us, and now Anne Throop Craig joins the small number of women writers who have joined our fellowship. Perhaps what she says about the ancient races may strain our brains a bit, but those of Scotch or Irish blood will find it interesting reading:

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New York.

My collaborator, Louise Rice, tells me that I am graciously invited to join your Camp-Fire, and inflict the story of my life on the other bivouackers. I consider it a pleasant and novel privilege, being only human, but hope you will not find it too much of an infliction.

The plot and scheme of the tale are the fruit, in the main, of the soaking in of old saga lore that I have done ever since I was a little girl; Norse and Irish, most, with Saxon and German, odds and ends of Eastern and Indian and Gypsy and Finnish and so on, thrown in. But my collaborator is not only—may I be a little slangy, and say—a "cracker-jack" at spieling out a yarn, but she knows a thing or two out of musty old books herself.

THE story deals with the ancient Irish colonizers of the west regions of the present Scotland, anciently known at one time as Pictland in Alba, at another time as Dalaradia.

Picts, Norse, and the Erse from some distant regions of ancient Ierna, or Eriu (some of Ireland's early names), settled and conflicted here, in and about the West Highlands, for many centuries—the flux and mergence of them doubtless beginning considerably before, or at least near to, the entry of the Christian era.

Part of this population in the early centuries where approximately we place our story may have been made up of still rudely living survivors of the wholly primitive Stone Age men. These in the course of time were merged with the tribes grouped in Norse and Pictish and Gaelic divisions. That the Picts were wholly Stone Age men, or more advanced survivors from them, I do not think there is any assurance, and it would rather seem likely that the so-called Picts surmised by many archæologists to have been a swarthy, dark-haired and perhaps curly haired, people, were, while unmixed, of the race known as "Mediterranean," and the origin of this race is more obscure, the relics of its settlements also often indicating advance in many arts and customs far beyond Stone Age rudeness. But we may say as much as this: that there was probably in all the western islands an aboriginal substratum of Silurian Stone Age communities, left over from the glacial period. These I believe, are discovered to have been "long-skulled," short-statured or medium-statured, black-haired types, and there seems reason to believe that these contributed to the tribes later known as Picts. There are indications, also, that tribes were classed with the Picts, who—perhaps a later mixture with those akin to the Cimbri, or Belgæ of the Rhine's mouth region—were large, big-boned, red-haired types.

OUT of legends we get not fewer grains of truth, and often a truer race psychology, doubtless than we get out of dug up bones and other tangible relics. The legends of Ireland tell of early races attempting to colonize the country; their expulsion by aborigines, and their return again in several detachments, after variously long periods. After the return of a first important detachment, this remained, grew steadily powerful and built up and organized communities in a most orderly manner, politically and socially. This immigration is known in the traditions as that of the Firbolg—with subdivisions, and, by a thousand evidences in the saga lore, it would seeem they constituted the actual and permanent backbone of the original Irish nationality. The return of these on their second arrival, is spoken of in the legends as from the East, some of them coming from the ancient "Scythia," others from Greece, perhaps in the region of Thrace. To these lands they had fled, in two divisions presumably, after their expulsion from Ireland by its aborigines. Their story is told in the traditions of the "Nemedians," to be interpreted as solar-myth, or as having a plausible claim to human reality, according to the school of folk-lorists to which one belongs.

OF THE parties of "Nemedian" refugees, those who unfortunately landed in Greece were made slaves. The other party went to a land, perhaps "Scythia," where the people were said to be deeply versed in arts and occult lore and magic through their initiate priesthood. There, we are told, the refugees became learned and advanced in such culture themselves.

One may suspect it was a Finnish population with the fair admixture attributed to the Slav, and not only of the Tatar variety, which was the Scythic population with which the refugee "Sons of Nemed" from ancient Ireland mixed, for there is much in the Finnish lore to correspond with the druidic tradition surviving also in the Irish materials, and in Ireland this is associated with a "fair race"— of which we are told next. This was represented in a wonderful immigration of a "fair-skinned," noble people, almost divine in their powers, the people known as the Tuatha De Danaan (Tribes of the Gods of Dana). The personages of these tribes, as they figure in the legends, are doubtless actually gods themselves of some considerable colony invading ancient Ireland, or else their gradually apotheosized priests and heroes.

BUT the colony of immigrants to which this pantheon with its beautiful heroic legends is assigned is ethnically classified as made up from some branch or branches of the Goidelic (otherwise Gaelic) "Celts" and it does not seem far fetched to think that those branches which brought with them the pantheon of the gods of Dana were minglings of possibly ruder western tribes of Europe with the earliest Cretans and their strangely advanced civilization; also with advanced communities which existed in Alpine regions at a certain period, the ultimate origin of both of which is obscure; and with, also, precursors of fair Norse and Slav tribes in the Finnish region about the Baltic Sea, the region known as Scythia. Such a supposition would explain many things regarding the organization of the more ancient communities of Ireland which manifested an orderly political sense to an extraordinarily mature degree, and which by the evidence of tangible relics and a thousand indications in the traditionary lore seems assuredly to be akin, not to barbaric peoples alone, but to one or more of the most remote ancient nations which had attained to civilization and refinements centuries before the Christian era; which had begun to deteriorate and to pass, perhaps, at the period when their emigrations reached parts of Europe; and whose ultimate origins were beyond Europe; but whether in Mesopotamia, Africa or an extension of our western continent with its polished

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Mayans and Incas, no one can perhaps ever say.

These traits of orderly political and social conditions, and the impress of intellectual cults in religion and even in science, seem to have characterized the community of the Firbolg clans, and their eventual harmonious mingling with the other legendary people known as the Tuatha De Danaan. These latter, indeed, it is said, also significantly, discovered to their amazement that they spoke the same tongue as the Firbolg occupants they came to conquer in the island, and thus they knew they had been once the same people, although the difference in their places of sojourn had created for them different cultural attainments.

ALL this rambling about races may not seem clearly relevant to my topic. But it was from these earliest colonies which laid an actually strong foundation for Irish development that there sprang the strong clans which built the great cyclopean coast fortresses and mountain strongholds whose ruins, many of them, survive to this day in the northwest and west of Ireland, on mainland and border islands, and who sent doubtless the earliest strong-armed chieftains to build the like again on the west coast and adjacent islands of what is now Scotland and the Ilan Manainn (pronounced Ee-lan Van-non, the Isle of Man). These people were, it would surely seem, the basis of Gaeldom, the true Gaels.

The "Milesians" of the legends were doubtless also offshoots of Goidels (or Goidelic Celts); in the main, perhaps those known as "Celtiberians" of Spain, whose trail is possibly left in the Basque remnants in the Pyrenees. But traditions indicate also other conquering invaders, or partially conquering ones, who came against the earlier Gaels, conquerors who seem to have adopted afterward much of the lore of their predecessors, and to have even become confused in measure, in the legends, with the Gaelic "Milesians" on this account. These seem rather to have been, not Gaelic Celts, but other tribes of doubtless partially Celtic origin, but mingled with Norse, rather than with Alpine, Iberian, or Mediterranean strains. Such tribes are classified as "Brythons," Brythonic Celts. They were likely in part comprised by the red-haired, tall, loose-jointed Cimbri, or Belgæ, of Cæsar and the Roman historians, mingled with the Norse, and also, very likely to some extent, with the people merged of several stocks already, and constituting the Gallic population proper. But the old Greek writers did us a bad turn when they dubbed all tribes north of the Alps "Keltoi," for it is that which has kept the scholars guessing to reconcile history, legend and archæology.

AS FOR the Pictish tribes in Britain and Scotland, which enter our story, no one can absolutely contradict us if we stretch our imagination a bit and believe that, if they did grow up on a foundation of crude Silurian Stone Men, it is not impossible that minglings of those Mediterranean races which contributed Umbrian, Samnian, and Etruscan problems of origins to ancient history wandered through Europe and added no inconsiderable share to the social advance and the developments in religious cults which existed in the kingdoms of even far Pictland, when Irish and Norse began to descend upon it for plunder or settlement. It is on such a supposition that I build up a measure of the story of *Tlaya*, the wicked and handsome; and her venomous priest; of the *Sons of Dubha*, and of the beautiful *Fedalm*, in whom is represented such a mingling of Norse and Pict as doubtless took place often in those old days. Any or all of these characters *might* have existed. The *Macduff* of Shakspere, the MacDuffees, McAfees, and the other varieties of the name, are of the "Sons of Dubha" (the Dark One)—of the Clan Alpine and its kindred clans anciently in the West Highlands, the islands, and the coast there. *The Red Sweynie* (in the Erse: *Suibhne Ruad*, and anglicized "Red Sweeney") is nearest to a historical character in the tale. A chief, of his name, expelled from Ireland by infuriated Irishmen for similar misdeeds, is written of.

SINCE you ask me politely for personal details, may I choose only some which relate to my interest in things Gaelic rather than tell my college and miscellaneously chosen education, my Ohio birthplace, my family tree of American pioneers, patriots and professors—to say nothing of my age? It has always fascinated me to imagine that this interest is atavistic. Which may be nonsense, but I like to believe—while I am calling myself daffy for doing so—that I once was somebody—a queen, a knight, an ancient bard, a druidess, or even a fairy person, in that enchanted old land, and that I have had to return somewhere to take up its story. Or else that some spirit from that old time has sometime whispered to me whatever it was—that long ago made me wish to read and write and think about it.

OF COURSE every American has strains of all sorts from the old world's past in him, and French, Scottish, Welsh and English I have behind me in most of the lines of my forebears. But they have been in this country since its first guns were fired and its first forests cleared, and only my father's mother bears a Gaelic name. Yet it is she, of them all behind me, that I look most like, and she was Irish, of the type we call Iberian, out of the west of Scotland, and marked in certain regions of Ireland to this day.

No fairy tales spellbound me as the Irish ones did, and certain of the Scottish ones. And when I was growing older I brushed aside most other things for all the old Irish saga volumes I could coax from librarians. When I came first to New York I hunted up the Gaelic societies, where I didn't know a soul, and stole in to their evening meetings to listen, a stranger waif, in a corner, to their Irish songs and talk.

At last I began to write and lecture about Ireland. A few years ago I had the satisfaction of bringing before a good many people in our city two of my epic plays (called fashionably that year, "pageants") which told episodes of two great heroic periods of Irish life in its golden time: the hero story of her pagan warrior and defender, Finn MacCool, and a no less heroic tale of the soldier-saint days of her royal priest, Columkill.—ANNE THROOP CRAIG.

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom, Thomas McMorrow rises and introduces himself. I think you'll grant his last request:

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New York.

You fellows ever see Spring Street where this magazine comes from? Me, neither. I went down there one day last week to give the works the double-O, and maybe meet these men Hoffman and Wade who been writing me so many nice letters and enclosing my manuscripts, but I didn't see Spring Street. I went down a long narrow alley lined with Italian delicatessen stores and saw an enormous building about twenty stories high. As I looked up at it and framed a few well-chosen words a splinter of Spring Street lit in my eye. It preyed on my mind. I went into an Italian druggist's across the way and found him plotting a black-hand outrage with two friends. He told me to throw up my eye-lids and give him my handkerchief. I wouldn't do that, so he stuck his black hand in my eye, looked into my very soul, and guessed I'd better see a doctor. I needed one, then, and I blew before he put me in need of a glass eye. The doctor cleaned out my eye and collected a cinder, some finger-nails, a dollar, and of black-hand bombs a trace. I was all spoiled, and streaked with tears, so I had to pass up *Adventure* for the day.

ABOUT me? Now, look here, I'm all right. I never been bit by a lariat or got lost in the pathless chaparejos, but I work for a living, never been in jail, and got lots of bad habits. I was born right here on Manhattan, thirty-one years ago, and have been here all my life. No, I'm not a cripple; I'm an ex-ball-player, six feet and one hundred and eighty, but just a regular city hick. When I go out West to Hoboken I strap on my sombreros and call people "stranger." I'm a member of the Tammany Hall County Committee, Irish parentage, white, unmarried (write c. o. *Adventure*), a member of New York Bar, ex-school teacher, builder of apartment-houses just now, and I raise on two pair when I sit next to the opener.

All the wild animals I ever saw are up in the Bronx Zoo, which is welcome to my share of them, but I admit there are sights west of the North River. I like the quiet life, with a cop asleep on the corner, the elevated snoring overhead—where you know a con man by his speaking to you without being introduced, where they hang the wash on the roof, dine in the back-yard, and where you remark it's a small world if you meet anybody you know. It takes all kinds of people to make a world, fellows! Let me live.—THOMAS MCMORROW.

THIS meeting of our Camp-Fire is pretty much taken up by long talks, I being the guiltiest party, but at least there's room to say that we've had word from a good many of our comrades at the front, reporting their safety. Among them are Erwin A. Walser, W. Townend, Harry C. Winters, Harold S. Lovett, C. F. Whiteley, S. B. Moorehead, Donald Francis McGrew, Carl G. Lindhult, George S. Olds, William H. Parr, R. R. Robertson, Geo. R. Cochran, Jerome E. Kemmerer, Patrick M. Gallagher, M. Logee, Roy T. Yellow, J. E. Hausmann, Erwin A. Walser, Ove Nelson, J. J. Gibbons, L. C. Longstreet, J. A. Pringle, Eric Levison, R. R. Robertson. There are many more but I have not their letters beside me.

If there were not so long a period between the time a letter reaches us and the time it can be passed on to you in print we would give at each Camp-Fire the list of our fighting comrades reported safe. At least we can share the word from them as soon as conditions permit and, of course, the report of any casualty sent to us. If you know any of our comrades who is a casualty, send in his name to be added to the Camp-Fire's honor-roll so that his personal friends among us may know the facts.

Now waiting for print are quite a number of letters from Camp-Fire members in khaki or Navy blue, and many other letters on many subjects, particularly on characters and phases of the old West, from comrades all over the map, Honduras to New Zealand, snow countries to tropics. Also there's a lot more good "dope" from gun-sharks, called forth by our article "Fire-Arms, Old and New," which we'll hear at our first February Camp-Fire.

TO WRITE in September anything concerning the war which will not be read until three months later is uncertain going, particularly with the Allied offensive in a state of progress that makes almost anything at least possible. Perhaps I consider possible a more sweeping victory from that offensive that do most other Americans, but even so I believe there are three points to be held in mind in spite of any hopes or guesses.

(1) First, we must push our war preparations on the basis that the war may last for years to come. For over four years Germany has tried to throw her enemies off guard and lessen their zeal for adequate preparation by sending out false reports of internal crumbling and general weakening. We must not swallow that bait. Germany will be crushed when she *is* crushed. Not before.

(2) Second, we must not keep our eyes on the Western front alone. I think the Allied belief that the war would be decided there has been largely responsible for Germany's successes. Having given less attention to other theaters of war, naturally the result has been to center the final struggle in the West, but that may have been merely

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making a mistaken theory come true by forcing it into operation. Certainly the losses on other fronts have been heavy, and certainly these losses have built up a stronger enemy for the Allies on the Western front. Perhaps a Germany soundly beaten elsewhere would have made a Germany far more easily beaten in the West. Perhaps it would have shifted the final struggle to some other front.

AS THINGS are, however, the decision is quite likely to come on the Western line. But who shall say that, though the war be decided *on* the Western front, it was not decided *by* the other fronts, or at least greatly prolonged by them?*

In any case, the second point to be kept foremost in mind is that, however important the Western front may be in the strategy of war, it is *not* the most important front in the strategy of peace. In other words, when it comes to peace terms the real danger to the United States and the Allies is *not* in Belgium and France, but east and southeast of Germany and Austria.

If a defeated Germany is allowed to make peace by restoring Belgium, Luxembourg and eastern France and returning Alsace-Lorraine to the latter country, that will be a *German victory.* And a victory that we Americans will some day pay for with our blood or the blood of our children.

GERMANY planned this war forty years ahead. She is still planning forty years ahead. Nor was this war the end of her first plannings. If she could in this one war sweep all before her and gain the world-dominion which alone will satisfy her iron ambition, well and good. If not, then she would see to it that this war at least gained for her a footing that would make success sure at the next attempt. And if she merely gives up land on the Western front *Germany will have the footing she planned for.*

Her chance to prepare for another bloody effort to conquer the world ten, twenty, forty years from now lies not along the border-line of France but in Russia, Finland, Lithuania, Esthonia, the Balkans, Turkey, Asia Minor. Nor are we to forget her admitted plan of building up a formidable central empire in Africa, her untold plans for other colonies or her grip on South America.

Take from her what you will on the West but leave Germany *any kind* of grip on the lands to her east and southeast, and she will go from the peace conference grinning in her sleeve over the victory she won from those who beat her on the battle-field.

THOSE lands to her east and southeast are rich in all the raw materials most essential to modern warfare. She knows how to use and develop them. Those lands are crammed with man-power. She knows how to seize it and make it serve her. Most of all, those lands are *the* strategic gateway to her real ambitions for future world-dominion. She knows how to use gateways.

For example, steel and the coal necessary to make it are perhaps the first essential among materials necessary for war-making. In 1914 Germany controlled 49 per cent. of Europe's steel-making capacity; her European opponents 48 per cent. Now she controls 68 per cent.; her European opponents less than 29 per cent. Much of this gain, of course, comes from Belgium and northern France, but captured Russia and Russian Poland are heavy factors and their supply is, unlike the Western deposits, capable of enormous expansion.

Man power? What are the limits if Germany is left free hand to her east where all is in a flux that makes anything possible?

Strategic gateway? Give Germany her gateway to the east and southeast and God help the world!

Even deprive her of technical political control of Russia, the new border states between, the Balkans and Turkey, but leave her *any* chance for her agents and propaganda to work in these lands and, when the next crisis comes, you will find that these lands, their vast supplies of material and men and their limitless political and strategic opportunity *belong to Germany.*

AND this brings us to the third point to be kept foremost in mind:

(3) So long as Germany is Germany she —is Germany. She is evil organized. Organized for generations; trained from childhood to see crooked; shaped root, stock and branch for the gaining of her evil ends. So long as any power is left her she will organize and build up that power until it

* Since this was written Bulgaria has collapsed, Palestine fallen and the crisis greatly shifted to the southeast.

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is great enough for her next bloody effort. When it comes to peace terms we can not, we *dare* not, let any consideration come before the absolute necessity of self-protection for the future. Mercy is both stupid and wicked when it means the death of the merciful and the bloody success of the spared. When it is a choice between living with a snake and killing a snake, we kill it.

Take from her every inch of territory she has seized. Leave her only room to live, but not an atom more to grow strong upon for new mischief. She is a criminal, a dangerous criminal, and must be kept in jail.

BUILD all around her a sure rampart of enemies or neutrals and *keep her out of them.* Allow no German to remain in them or to settle in them. Otherwise her agents and propaganda will undermine them as they did to Russia and have been trying to do to every other country on the globe. Doubtless that sounds extreme, but Germany's real weapon is not brawn or brain but *propaganda.*

Take her navy from her. Make her pay ship for ship for the merchantmen her U-boats have sunk against the law of nations. Leave her just enough commercial and economic strength to keep her own people in simple comfort. Boycott her from foreign markets. A nation economically strong is strong enough for war. Therefore she must not become economically strong. Germany has made herself a criminal, a convict. She must be kept in jail. For she knows no repentance except that enforced by might.

ONCE, like many other Americans, I was a victim of the German propaganda that the German people themselves were forced into this war by the few autocrats who ruled them, that the German people as a whole were not in sympathy with the militarism of the Junkers, that the German people were at heart kindly, peace-loving people who were to be pitied because they were being made to fight against their will. Like many other Americans, I became an unconscious agent of the Kaiser's and helped spread that friendly and broad-minded idea. Probably you did the same. But now we've waked up.

Now we know that the German people as a whole were heart and soul with their Government in the great ambition of world-conquest, in *Deutschland über Alles*, in the theory of might over right, the policy of "blood and iron." They had been systematically trained to it from childhood. It is bred in their bone. They do not know how to think in any other way. They are to be pitied because Prussianism seized upon them in infancy and distorted them into the ugly products it needed for its work. But that does not alter the fact that they *are* these ugly products and must be dealt with as such. The leopard can not change its spots.

IF THEY suddenly "reform" when a sword is held to their throats, let us not be deceived. Let them first *prove* their reformation. It took them forty years to become a nation of brutes. Give them, then, forty years probation and see whether or not they can in that time make themselves into a nation of human beings. Until at least one new generation is born and grows up, trusting the German people will be risky business.

Suppose they have a revolution and throw off Kaiserism? *They can't.* They can throw off the Kaiser, but they can't throw off the Kaiserism they drank in with their mothers' milk. They made no effort to throw off the yoke while they were winning. To throw it off after they've found they can't win would be merely doing what they think will gain most under the circumstances. Not a change of heart; only a change in their ability to do evil.

ALREADY, with the tide only beginning to turn against them, they are busily and systematically at work creating sympathy for themselves so that, taking advantage of our soft-heartedness, they can gain easier terms of peace when their cause is lost. Oh, this wonderful German propaganda machine! As delicately adjusted as it is far-reaching and powerful. Have you noticed that when Germany's hopes have seemed bright there has been no sympathy-getting German propaganda but that the very instant those hopes have been checked the Hun propaganda machine at once has begun sending out sympathy-getters preparing a soft bed to light on if Germany should lose—letters "accidentally" found on captured prisoners, news

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reports from neutral countries, artistic touches furnished by German agents in our midst?

If, like me, you have a file of daily papers running back to 1914 you can prove this. Watch the *little* news items, those of seemingly minor importance. Do you remember that news report of how the Kaiser, *after* the German failure at Verdun, knelt amid the battle ruins and called God to witness that he had not willed this destruction? *After* the failure. Why didn't he do this dramatic little stunt amid the ruins of some previous battle when the German hopes were high? That one instance proves little, but you'll find it is part of an unfailing system:—while Germany wins, turn the propaganda elsewhere; when things look bad for Germany, set the propaganda to creating sympathy that will make things easier for her at the peace conference. A cold-blooded, calculating, effective system nicely adjusted to the job of getting the most for Germany no matter what the outcome of the war.

IT'S working full-blast now. In July, the instant the Hun offensive broke down and the Allies took the whip-hand, the Hun propaganda machine began grinding for sympathy. All of a sudden German prisoners were found to have an amazing number of unmailed letters on their persons, letters full of phrases about "poor Germany," "this awful war," "suffering at home," "these horrors," "hopelessness," "our bitter agony," etc., etc. In American papers here again began the flood of little news items featuring the hard times the poor Germans are having. In the paper I bought an hour ago is a touching report from Switzerland saying that the Kaiser "has greatly aged and that his hair is snow white and his shoulders stooped . . . eyes are feverish . . . gestures abrupt . . . face severely lined . . . general expression of a man suffering a great sorrow." Too bad. But there weren't any reports about the poor old fellow's white hair, etc., between March 21 and July 15 while the Germans were winning. Strange that this touching picture is sent out just when it is needed most for Germany's interests. Incidentally, it isn't made clear whether he's sorrowing over the hell into which he swept the world or merely over the fact that his blood-and-iron attempt to Germanize the world is crumbling.

In the same paper is another report from Switzerland, this time about the poor Kaiserin's serious illness. These two items are on page 2. A good antidote is to turn to page 3, nearly filled with one day's casualty list of 815 Americans killed or maimed by Germans.

THESE are only chance samples out of thousands. Watch for them. And cross your fingers when you read or hear. With the war well into its fifth year it's a little late for the Germans to talk loudly about gentleness and sympathy—for themselves. How about the terms of peace *they* laid down from time to time when things were going well for them? Any gentleness and sympathy then? Their plan is a simple one:—if the Allies are whipped, use the iron heel; if Germany is whipped, use gentleness. Very nice—for Germany.

The civilized world has gone through years of hell to defeat Germany; only folly will render those years fruitless by mistaken mercy at the peace table. Safety first—safety for our children from another such hell created by the same ambitious, evil-saturated people. Safety for democracy and decency. Self-preservation comes before mistaken sentiment. Be merciful when you can and dare, but not when mercy means keeping alive an evil force whose sole aim is to substitute brute force for mercy throughout the world for all time. Better one act of stern justice to a criminal than such a plunge back into barbarism. Be merciful? Yes, but let's be merciful to our own children first, not to the breeder of blood-lust who is now destroying them and who will rise again to destroy them if we leave him the strength to do it.

BE PROOF against the subtle, cringing sympathy propaganda of the Hun who in his success used to boast that all sympathy and mercy were weakness. Let us keep before our eyes those things that can furnish the real sinews of war for another Hun attempt to Prussianize the world, and let us see to it that these sinews are not left to him in the peace terms. A partly crushed snake has still the power to kill. Let us see to it that the German snake is wholly crushed before we leave him.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

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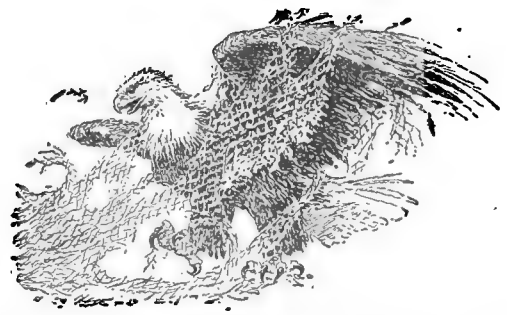
FIGHTING THE HUN WEB



A department devoted to throwing light upon the actual workings of the subtle German propaganda in the United States, Canada and the other Allied countries. Every time you discover one of the strands of this web, tell the rest of us about it, briefly but clearly. Once seen, it loses its dangerous power.

IT'S wonderful what German propagandists can get away with by ceaselessly repeating lies that fly in the face of established facts and published truth. For instance here in Connecticut a Waterbury woman phoned the agricultural college at Storrs the other day that she had a peck of peaches which they might as well call for as wait for her to can them. She had received a card from the State Committee of Food Supply asking her to enroll in an organization of the commonwealth's housewives that was formed to put up 5,000,000 quarts of fruits and vegetables. Her neighbors all got these cards; 200,000 of them were distributed. On each and every card was printed a plain statement from the Food Administration that no home products would be seized by the Government. Yet the German liars had told her so many times over that her home-canned stuff would be seized that she refused to believe a printed pledge backed by the good faith of her Government and issued with the further backing of her own State!

By lying hard enough you can back facts clear off the map, and Germany's agents prove you can.—PAUL LARSEN, Bridgeport, Conn.

AND now they're running around, dressed up as Red Cross nurses, notifying the families of soldiers in France that their boys have been killed, and the Government has been withholding the news. Five instances of this reported from this county (Queens) in forty-eight hours. More lies, of course. The Red Cross has nothing to do with reporting casualties; the Government sends prompt word to the families involved, as a rule even before the lists are made public in the newspapers.

This sort of Hun propaganda looks like malice, pure and simple. What good can it do the Teuton-Turk cause to prostrate a wife or mother with grief, when the lie will automatically disprove itself by the advent of a letter from the "dead" man, maybe on the next mail? But it does provide a good basis for warning every soldier to write the home folks often.—TOM HAMILTON, Mineola, L. I.

YOUR new department, "Hunting the Hun," is one of the finest, if not the finest effort I have seen made in any magazine offered on the news-stands, to call public attention to the hideous danger we are all in (most of us unconsciously). This department will grow, and render a tremendous public service. Its most remarkable feature is the call for individual watchfulness, and this habit, once inculcated, will continue to work wonders for this nation and the whole of humanity long after this war shall have been thoroughly well won. Whatever helps the progress of this nation, directly blesses all humanity, as most of the world is beginning to be ready to admit.

Of course, we are most of us going to be a bit clumsy at first, and a bit heavy-eyed and dull; but since reading your editorial the other day the following instances of enemy propaganda have attracted my attention, and *I have denounced them in each case promptly, thoroughly, without fear, and without respect for the propagandist's alleged feelings.*

(1) A man offered to sell me stock in various concerns that have paid good dividends for a long time past. He urged me to sell Liberty Bonds and re-invest to better advantage. He said that the purchase of Liberty Bonds was sufficient; there was no need to hold them. A man, said he, should then look to his own advantage. He assured me that after this war, *whichever side might win it*, all Government bonds wouldcsell at such low prices that their holders would regret the day they bought them, *even supposing the socialists should not come into power and confiscate them.* He added that commercial interests were sure to stop the war before any real decision could be reached; they would stop it, he said, at the exact moment when it would pay them best to stop it, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, and that this would be much easier for them to do since big commercial men like Schwab had been given such power. "Sell Liberty Bonds and re-invest" was the song he had to sing, and he had been singing it to whoever would listen for a long time past. I notified the police, and have not seen him or heard from him since. I was careful to give the police my name and address, and to offer to appear against the man if called on. And the police were careful to express their thanks.

(2) Several people have told me that the Vatican will never permit Germany to be really beaten. Several people, none of them Roman Catholic, have said that the Pope, through the priests, will bring such pressure to bear on individuals that this Government will be deceived into thinking there is

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an overwhelming popular desire for peace before Prussianism is destroyed. The answer to that is that this country is not ruled from Rome, and that, when given their choice between open patriotism and secret propaganda, Americans, whatever their religion, will know which course to take *provided the issue is kept clear.*

(3) At a semi-public entertainment a Victrola record was played, sandwiched between "Keep the Home Fires Burning" and "Over There," deliberately and noisily yowling about the alleged wrongs of Ireland. One line was "We hate and despise our oppressors," and although the name of England was not mentioned the purpose to stir up feeling against England was so obvious that only two people applauded. Setting aside the absolute fact that stories of oppression of Ireland by England today are *all lies made out of whole wool*, it is an obviously pro-German and anti-American thing in this hour to sing or applaud a song likely to arouse feeling against America's brave ally. To have let the playing of that record go by without a protest would have been to overlook an opportunity to serve the United States, and I am glad to say I made the protest. We all of us know gallant Irishmen. Now is the time to hear of gallant men, not of politicians who choose the hour of the whole world's agony in which to stir strife among allies, for their own selfish ends.—TALBOT MUNDY.

"THIS war against Germany, between you and me, is just an excuse to get ready for a war with Japan. Why, an army officer told me that they're laying concrete foundation work in the training-camps to last for twenty-five years! What are they doing that for, if they don't intend to train the young idea how to shoot? And who'll the young idea shoot? The Japs of course. A look at the map will tell anybody that."

Ever hear a man drivel along like that? It goes best on the Pacific coast.

Pretty good German business to represent us as mistrustful of an associate in the war. Maybe "they" *are* building training-camps with an eye to permanency.

Maybe on the other hand "they" are figuring on the possibility of permanent general military training—"preparedness." Some of us hope so, more of us think that if we had had permanent training-camps, permanent general military training, permanent preparedness, the war would have been over by now, or at least the Germans would have carefully abstained from dragging us into it.

But aside from this, any reasonable man knows we're in the fight to wallop Germany and Austria to a pig's whisper, and if we clean up on the job there'll be much less likelihood of war with Japan or anybody else. Just look that up on your map, Mr. Man!—J. W. HOLCOMB, New York.

LOOKING AHEAD

"Win the War but Get Ready for Peace"

No matter how long the war lasts it is our first duty during that time to work unrelentingly for victory. But we have a second duty. In peace we failed to prepare for war. In war we must not fail to prepare for peace.

To help in meeting this second duty while we are meeting the first, *Adventure* has instituted this department. Its main purpose is to direct our readers' attention more definitely to the many problems America will face when peace comes and to offer an open forum for exchange of views.

In order to hear from as many as possible each expression of opinion must be limited to not more than one hundred and fifty words at most. Merely state the problem that, to you, seems most urgent, adding briefly if you like, your idea of the right solution. The department's value lies in the opinions taken as a whole, not in any one of them.

"Looking Ahead" is not a place for editorial opinion. It is a forum for the opinions of as many as possible; its office is to seek the consensus of those opinions as a guide and stimulus to all. The editors will do their honest best to make the selection for publication as closely as possible indicative of the proportionate importance given the

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various problems and suggestions by the Americans of all classes and conditions who read our magazine.

It is up to you as an American to do your part. If you haven't thought about these things, think now. Then tell us what you think.

All contributions must be signed, with address given. Only initials will be printed if you insist, but the nation's problems are matters on which an American should not be afraid to speak over his own name.

DO YOU remember how few Americans saw the need of Preparedness—before the war? "Won't be any more wars."—And, when war did come, "Oh, this country won't be dragged in."—"Don't need to prepare. Guess we can lick anybody else anyway."—"Don't bother me; I'm too busy." And all the other similar replies that blindness, conceit, stupidity, pro-Germanism, and want of foresight could suggest.

So we didn't prepare for war. Therefore when we found ourselves in the war we weren't ready or able to do anything. It was a year and a quarter before we made ourselves felt as a real factor in the trenches—at Château Thierry. It was nearly a year and a half before we had an independent army in the field. We did splendidly, once war was declared. But we found that, splendid and quick as our preparation was, it took more than a year to get ready. More than a year! While, if we had been prepared and at the start could have put 2,000,000 men in the field—well, would it have shortened the war? Would it have saved untold suffering, lives, property? We, and the whole world, paid the bitter penalty of unpreparedness.

A TRAGIC lesson, written out in huge letters of blood and fire. But have we learned anything from it? Not much. In peace we were too stupid to see the need of preparing for war. Now, in war we are proving too stupid to see the need of preparing for peace.

Can any one believe the world is going to settle back after the war into just the same old conditions that existed before? Can any one think that having been turned upside down, rent and riven as never before in its history, the world will be the same place as it was before? That old thoughts, points of view, customs, orders and institutions have not been shaken to their foundations, changed or discarded, left in turmoil? That the end of the war will not mean the beginning of a reconstruction period, social, sociological, economic and political, to meet suddenly changed conditions such as the world has never known?

Does any fool think *this* country will be some kind of marvelous exception and not share in the internal changes coming?

WHAT will the changes be? God alone knows. But even a fool knows that, if we let the peace-crisis find us as unprepared as did the war-crisis, we will again pay a bitter price.

Are we going to be unprepared *again?* It looks so. We are showing the same stupid lack of common sense, the same folly in refusing to consider the future.

THE first, the immediate, need is to push the war to the utmost. In doing that we have sense enough not to center all our war efforts on next week or next month but to *plan ahead.* But most of us plan no further ahead than the peace conference, apparently thinking that whipping Germany will automatically and instantly drop us back into comfortable peace, solve all our internal problems, leave us nothing more to worry about or to do.

It was to help stir Americans into seeing the need of serious thought on the problems peace will bring that this department was started. No other department this magazine ever started has met with so little response, or anything like so little response. Therefore the need of it is plainly even greater than I thought.

So, if no one else will help, I'll keep it going by myself. The need is too great for us all to turn our backs upon it. If I can make even a few dozen of you think where you have not been thinking, if I can make even a very few of you pass on your thoughts to others through this little department, my efforts will be well repaid.

REMEMBER Cassandra? The lady who's been famous for some thousands of years because she could foretell the future so accurately—but no one would ever believe her? Well, I'm no Cassandra, but I think about her a good many times. If any of you would take the trouble to run back through the files of this magazine for the last four or five years, he'd see why. During those years I've talked a good deal about the future, and often enough my ideas may have seemed fantastic and rather foolish. But quite shamelessly I call attention to the fact that ninety-odd per cent. of them *have come true.* Those back files would make good reading for whichever one of you thought I was the biggest —— fool.

I'm shameless about thus endorsing myself as a prophet. For I know I'm right in seizing upon every means that may make you consider more seriously the coming problems of peace. If all you can see in it is self-conceit, well, so much the worse for your brains.

I'M AS strong for Preparedness for peace as I was for Preparedness for war. The need is as great. The proof will not be flashed upon us so quickly as it was in the first case and I may be dead before I can sit up in a wheel-chair and shrill at you in a cracked voice, "I told you so!" But the proof will come. And if we again commit the blunder of Unpreparedness, we, or our children, will pay the bitter bill.

Have *you* any opinion as to what peace problems need our consideration now? No? Then, if you are a patriotic American, go and get one. Yes? Then, if you are a patriotic American, pass it on to as many other Americans as possible and start them to thinking about it. In advance.

When, oh when, will Americans get over the strange idea that patriotism is a matter of war-time only?—A. S. H.

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VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES FREE TO ANY READER

THESE services of *Adventure* are free to *any one.* They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules,* thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure,* New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For 25 cents we will send the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Postpaid. This is cost.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

If holder of paper card, give us its number and destroy it on receipt of metal card.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

WILL BUY: January, 1912, and March, 1915. Twenty-five cents each.—J. F. KILEY, 111½ Drayton St., Savannah, Ga.

WILL SELL: Complete file from first issue to January, 1918. State terms.—WALTER DAVISON, 59 E. Van Buren St., Chicago, Ill.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Letter-Friends Back Home

A Free Service Department for American, Canadian, and Other Allied Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Others in Camp at the Front, or in Hospital.

Any one in the United States or Allied service who wishes to brighten the time with letters from "back home" or wherever else this magazine circulates, and with the personal touch and interest of hitherto unknown friends, can secure these letters and these friends by sending us his name and military address to be published once in this department as soon as censorship of soldiers' foreign addresses permits. In the meantime his address can be printed as "care *Adventure,*" letters to be forwarded at once by us to the military address he gives us in confidence. Among our readers of both sexes, all classes and from all parts of the world, he is likely to gain a number of friendly, personal correspondents. He is free to answer only such as he is comfortably able to answer under the conditions that surround him, and it is even suggested that the number of correspondents for any one man be determined by the needs of his comrades as well as by his own.

This magazine, of course, assumes no responsibility other than the publishing of these names and addresses as its space will permit. Experience has shown that the service offered is a very real and needed one, and all not themselves in service are asked to do their part in making the daily life of those fighting in our defense brighter and pleasanter through personal friendships across the intervening miles and by whatever personal, human kindnesses such friendships may suggest.

When giving your military address make it as permanent a one as possible.

SPR. LEWIS J. JONES, 264638 6th Batt., No. 1 Coy., Can. Rly. Troops, France.

SPR. EDWARD OFFUT and SIG. HENRY C. CARREAU, 4th (F. S.) Coy., R. C. E.

PVT. V. C. JOHNSON.
PVT. ROSS A. MCCOLLUM.
PVT. S. SCHENBERG.
Address last three in care of *Adventure.*

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

Addresses

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 1302 N St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

High-School Volunteers of the U. S.—An organization promoting a democratic system of military training in American high schools. Address *Everybody's,* Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

American Defense Society, Inc.—An organization working systematically for real Americanism and furthering the winning of the war by watchfulness and effort at the right points. Address 44 East 23rd Street, New York City.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

Remember

Magazines are made up ahead of time. An item received today is too late for the current issue; allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

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Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Also temporarily covering South American coast from Valparaiso south around the Cape and up to the River Plate. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1
B. W. BRINTNALL, 5527 33d Ave., N. E., Seattle, Wash. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S. and British Empire; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men, local to the U. S., should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brintnall.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay: river, lake and road travel, game, fish and woodcraft; furs, freshwater pearls, herbs; and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Johnson City, Tenn. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

8. Western U. S. Part 2
CAPT.-ADJ. JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, care *Adventure*. Covering the Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri. Hunting, fishing, travel. *Especially*, early history of Missouri valley.

9. Western U. S. Part 3 and Mexico Part 1
J. W. ROBERTSON, 912 W. Lynn Street, Austin, Texas. Covering Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and the border states of old Mexico: Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas.

10. Mexico Part 2
J. W. WHITEAKER, Cedar Park, Texas. Covering Central and Southern Mexico below a line drawn from Tampico to Mazatlan. History, geography, customs, government, animals, minerals, products and industries. (Mr. Whiteaker is now serving with our army in France. His department is accordingly in abeyance until we find a suitable successor.)

11. North American Snow Countries Part 1
ROBERT E. PINKERTON, 5036 Utica St., Denver, Colo. Covering Minnesota, Wisconsin, Manitoba, a strip of Ontario between Minn. and C. P. Ry. Canoes and snowshoes; methods and materials of Summer and Winter subsistence, shelter and travel, for recreation or business.

12. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 2
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

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Return postage not required from U. S. or Canadian soldiers, sailors or marines in service outside the U. S., its possessions or Canada.

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13. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. Covering southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

14. North American Snow Countries Part 4
ED. L. CARSON, Clear Lake, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

15. North American Snow Countries Part 5
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipments, clothing, food, physics, hygiene; mountain work.

16. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, Honolulu, T. H. Covering customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

17. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, Nitro, West Va. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

18. The Balkans
ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH, *Evening Post*, 20 Vesey St., New York City. Covering Roumania, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Turkey (in Europe); travel, sport, customs, language, local conditions, markets, industries.

19. Asia, Southern
GORDON MCCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.

20. Japan and Korea
ROBERT WELLES RITCHIE, Mountain Lakes, N. J. Covering travel, hunting, customs of people, art and curios. (Mr. Ritchie is now in France as a correspondent. His department is accordingly in abeyance until we can find a suitable successor.)

21. Russia and Eastern Siberia
CAPTAIN A. M. LOCHWITZKY (formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), Quartermaster, U.S. Troops, Mercedes, Texas. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalien; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

22. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, Eagle Bird Mine, Washington, Nevada County, Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

23. Africa Part 2
GEORGE E. HOLT, Frederick, Md. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, etc.

24. ★ Africa Part 3. Portuguese East Africa
R. W. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Covering trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc.

25. Africa Part 4. Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East Africa, Uganda and the Upper Congo
CHARLES BEADLE, care Authors' League of America, 33 West 42d St., New York. Covering geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, mining, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, opportunities for adventure and sport.

26. ★ New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

27. Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, 1106 Van Nuys Bldg., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, H. I. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba. Or J. V. Knight, Director, Republic of Cuba News Bureau, Woolworth Building, New York.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen., Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner; R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Commission, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't. of Com., Wash., D. C.

* (*Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached*)

The following "Ask Adventure" editors are now serving in our military forces. We hope you will be patient if their answers are at times delayed: Capt.-Adj. Joseph Mills Hanson; Capt. A. M. Lochwitzky.

'Round the World on $2 a Day

HERE'S a mighty good lead for the brethren who compose the Order of the Restless—that is, after the war. And their letters back home would give a world of fascinating reading to us Camp-Fire comrades:

Question:—"Immediately after the war I am going to make a trip from New York, 'round the world, back to New York, by steamers that are not regular passenger boats.

"I have no definitely fixed route, but here are some of the places I should like to touch: Havana, 'round the Horn or through the Panama Canal, New Zealand, Sydney, Batavia, Singapore, some Indian port other than Colombo, Red Sea, Italian port, Marseilles, Lisbon, Liverpool or London, New York.

"Now, can you give me an idea what it ought to cost me for ocean travel, how long I ought to allow for the trip, how much a day should be a fair average to pay aboard the various steamers and whether it would be impossible to do the thing without having quantities of bedbugs attack me? If they are as inevitable as rain I'd better give it up as they poison me in a manner quite exceptional and unpleasant.

"H. M. Tomlinson, a well-known sea-writer on the other side, told me ten years ago you could go anywhere on tramp steamers for $1.50 a day. I should estimate it at almost double that, would not you? I want to be comfortable in the sense that I don't *have* to go and endure unnecessary hardships.

"I'd like to make friends with many skippers and travel not as a miserable broken-down ne'er-do-well making a cheap passage, but as a traveler who is laying in a store of yarns and experiences to draw on without grimly unpleasant memories. Any hints, advice, tips, warnings, dope or suggestions would be welcome as the flowers in May.

"My fear in regard to this letter is that if I only get a reply in the pages of *Adventure* I *may* not see it, because I may leave America shortly. So if you do answer, and if you send it to *Adventure*, would you mind either sending it to me first (and I will forward it back to you or to *Adventure*) or else (if you write it on a typewriter) will you take a carbon copy and send the duplicate to me. I'd *hate* to miss it."—B. B. HOTT, Manchester, Mass.

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Answer, by Captain Dingle:—There is no chance that any queries addressed to this department will disappoint the inquirer, at least so far as replies are concerned. All matter is handled direct from inquirer to department and return; only a few representative replies are inserted in the magazine, judged to be of sufficiently general interest to be useful to others besides the inquirer. The information given, naturally, may not always please or satisfy the inquirer; but that is a chance to be taken.

After the war there should be no difficulty in making the connections you mention; but perhaps actual "tramps" may be less desirable for your ends than regular lines of freight steamers, which are not by any means the same, although the latter only carry a passenger or two by special arrangement with the skipper, as do the tramps. The time required to make this trip will depend much upon how you contrive your connections, and of course upon what time you elect to spend in various ports. The voyage could be made in six months, or might easily take a year or more.

Cargo vessels are of very many types and rates of speed—ranging from the seven-hundred tonner of a probable eight knots to the ten-thousand tonner which can make fourteen knots or better.

The cost of the voyage is also subject to many conditions; but, if prices and rates after the war return to anything like their pre-war level, a rate of $2 a day at most ought to carry you through. In some vessels the cost will be far less than this figure, and the price will be as much as the accommodation is worth.

If I were making the trip, non-professionally of course, I would allow myself about $2,000, and would feel absolutely secure against possible stopovers at ports, with an almost certain margin left on return. But even this amount is only deemed advisable since you prefer to make the trip in more or less comfort.

Regarding the lively bedbug, I'm afraid I can not give you a clean bill for any vessel trading in the East. I have plied to the Far East in vessels as different as windjammers and modern battle-ships, all the way through the gradations of steamers small and great, and have never found a vessel yet which did not acquire a colony of the brown-backed pests after a short time in those seas. They can, however, be kept fairly tame, and it is not hard to drive them from one's immediate vicinity in an iron steamer.

If you are extremely sensitive, most old-timers can give you intimate dope as to their own particular plan of campaign and you ought to survive. My own method was to nail slices of fresh citrus fruits to the bulkhead around my bunk, which seemed to drive them away—but did not make me whoopingly popular with my near neighbors.

Ask again if I've omitted anything you are seeking.

Christmas Island

WHEN next you fertilize your war garden you well may be doing it with a natural resource from a land you wot not of:

Question:—"Kindly give me, if you will, any information which you might possess regarding Christmas Island, an island in the South Seas which is of British possession and which the encyclopedia states is located about one hundred and fifty miles south of Java. I would like to know what the population of the island is, and what are the inhabitants, also what language they speak. Are there any Europeans on the island?"—JOHN S. ENGLISH, Boston, Massachusetts.

Answer, by Mr. Mills:—Christmas Island really lies two hundred miles southwest of Java, and was annexed to Singapore (in the Straits Settlements of Malaya) in 1900. Like the other tropic islands, it grows coconuts (for copra), rubber, and such like. But its principal export is phosphates of lime. It is one of the South Sea Islands that has become particularly valuable to the farmers—of other countries, because of the value of its phosphates for fertilizing barren land.

The population is almost a negligible quantity, and the language a mixture, with that of Malaya as the basis. The Europeans are there to run the island from the business point of view.

What Adventure Is

QUITE aside from the great inherent interest of the subjoined letters, we print the correspondence as an example of the personal contact which this department, in common with others in *Adventure*, develops between editor, writer, and reader, with all the rest of us interestedly listening in. If any of you, whose eyes chance to fall on this, have anything to offer, come on in and welcome:

"DEAR EDGAR YOUNG:—Your letter, published in *Adventure*, May third, interested me more than a little because I think it hits on the thing that is the vital point of real adventure. About the 'biological' part, I am an ignoramus, and I want to learn. But I know that there is 'intellectual' adventure.

"Do you know Robert Louis Stevenson's essays? I forget in which one it is that he says, 'True adventure is of the soul.' It sounds queer till you've tried it; and then you find out it's true. To put into words what I mean makes it sound almost sentimental; but I'm going to try, because it's a real experience, and because it isn't sentimental no matter how it sounds.

"I think adventure, anyway, is a trying out of yourself. You don't know, till you've tried, just how brave, or how honest, or how kind or how quick you can be! And every one is most entertained by his own inside life.

"Well then; if you believe in the spirit in a man, and I guess most of us do—I don't mean a religious thing, but just something that keeps us going—then you'll admit that that is the biggest force in us, and the most unknown.

"So finding out new things about it, in yourself and others, is the keenest sort of adventure. And it doesn't often happen that you can.

"Most of us are not our *real selves* enough, to meet the real self in others. But when you do, it's a time you don't forget! To look into the eyes of some one—and find the real person there—no pretense, no polite veils, but the real man! It's worth living for just that moment!

"Now maybe you think this is nonsense. I know

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it's not. Books aren't apt to tell you. You've got to be real, yourself, and not afraid. Most of us are afraid all the time to be real.

"Do you think I'm crazy? Or do you believe me? I'd like to know!"—M. D. HATHEWAY, New York.

Answer, by Mr. Young:—I was very much interested by your letter.

Crazy? You! Not on your life. You are absolutely sane—super-sane, in fact; and you have been using your head to think with. Your ideas concerning adventure are very original and fine.

I think you can get a part of the biological angle from Jack London's "Martin Eden," and the course of reading suggested therein.

Yes, I have read Stevenson's essays and liked them immensely. I also was helped very much by Emerson's essays—especially the one concerning "Compensation."

If you do read "Martin Eden" I would suggest that you try and make an intellectual goal beyond and beyond where he stops. It's hard to do but can be done.

Prowl out beyond the apex of the triangle of known thought into the unknown realms and see what you can see out there. That will be a kind of intellectual adventure for you. It will take lots of nerve.

But be of stout heart if you find yourself lonely out there. Yours with best wishes.

Mackerel Fishing

HERE'S a letter from a former editor of "Ask Adventure," who handled the department now conducted by Mr. Brintnall. Luck to you, Mr. Tucker, wherever you are:

Question:—What kind of net is generally used by the commercial fisheries of North America when fishing for mackerel?

"Please give dimensions of net.

"What kind of ship or boat is generally used to drag the nets when fishing for mackerel?

"Will you please give me some address of American firms that manufacture the above kind of nets?"—FELIPE R. CUEBAS, Hormigueros, Porto Rico.

Answer, by Mr. Tucker:—The kinds of net used in mackerel fishing vary greatly. The mackerel come in from the ocean in the Spring and leave in the fall, spawning about May to July in deep water. During this time they are followed and caught both from boats and from the shore. Seines, purse seines, gill nets and lines are used and in the shallow-water fishing near the shore are also used trap-nets, weirs, pound nets, etc. The bulk of the fishing, however, is done at sea in deep water where the fish are followed by schooners and when a school is approached the vessel drops her small boats overboard which proceed to surround the school with a seine. These seines are about 190 to 225 fathoms long, a 200-fathom seine running about 1,000 meshes deep.

The seine boats are quite large, averaging about 30 to 36 feet long, rowed by hand and generally there are two such boats to a schooner.

I cannot give you even approximate prices on nets. The war has completely upset that business and prices are good only for a very short time and you will have to obtain them direct. I suggest that you write to L. A. Burnham & Co., Gloucester, Massachusetts, U. S. A., and to The Linen Thread Co., New York.

I think that this covers your letter in full but if there is anything further you would wish to know I will be glad to help you.

To an Inquirer about the Alaska Railroad

ANOTHER good source of information for Mr. Marshall, aside from that mentioned by Mr. Carson, is the Alaska Railroad Commission, Seattle, Washington:

Question:—"Writing to you in regards to railroad that is being built up in to Alaska. Would like to know starting-point and points they are working at present time. What are the chances to start a stage line? What are the chances for two auto mechanics and chauffeurs and what wages are they paying?"—STEVE MARSHALL, Chicago, Illinois.

Answer, by Mr. Carson:—I would not attempt to predict a business success for a man I never saw under the circumstances governing your case.

You will readily see what a swell mess of trouble one might mix up by advising inquirers to undertake certain business ventures or to make a tacit guarantee of wages for any occupation.

Your question places me in an awkward position from which I am going to extricate myself by advising you to write to Postmaster, Anchorage, Alaska, asking him what you please but assuming no responsibility for his reply.

The Texas Rangers

IT MUST be an attractive service which can boast of a long waiting-list when the pay, in these days of the high cost of living, is only about fifty a month:

Question:—"Could you give me some information about the Texas Rangers, and what chances for a young man there are there?"—J. T. OLSEN, Gilbert, Iowa.

Answer, by Mr. Robertson:—At the present time the Texas Rangers' Service is recruited up to full strength, and has a long waiting-list. You could send to the Adjutant-General, State of Texas, Austin, Texas, and he would take your application for the service.

The requirements are that one should be, or should have been, a peace officer, that he is of the highest character, that he can use a gun if necessary, can ride a horse, understand and speak Mexican, and be a man of his word, one who would not give up his gun even if the other fellow had the drop. He must be able to rough it, and must understand the Western portion of the State, where he is on duty most of the time.

Trust that the above information will be of aid.

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HOW TO HELP WIN THE WAR

A Department Telling What *YOU* Can Do And How to Find Out About It

To make such a department comprehensive, reliable and up to date entails much work and considerable machinery. Since this machinery has already been created and put into operation, *Adventure* can render service most efficiently by giving its readers the use of this practical agency for connecting individual willingness with national needs.

***Adventure's* big brother, *Everybody's Magazine*, now conducts a "War Service Guide."**

There are thousands of good Americans who, with all their hearts, want to help in the big job at hand, but do not know what to do or how to find it and it is these patriots which *Everybody's* "Guide" wants to help enlist where they can be of real service. If you are one of them, write to Mr. Hoyt, care of *Everybody's* "Guide," Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City. Tell him your circumstances and your qualifications—whether you are looking for volunteer or paid work, whether you can give all or part time, in your home town only or anywhere the job may call you. Give him all the data he may need to judge what work you might do. There are "bits" to be done in farm and industrial work, in various relief organizations and in the Government offices as well as in the Army or Navy.

***Everybody's* "Guide" will also be glad to tackle any question of allowance or allotment, Government insurance or legal status growing out of the new and closer relationship which many are forming with Uncle Sam. Let *Everybody's* "Guide" try to help you.**

Do YOUR Part

Find out what to do and how to do it by writing to *Everybody's* "War Service Guide," Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada.

SILK, WILLIAM J. (Brother.) Last heard of about seven years ago, when he was firing on the Northwest railroad in Chicago. His age is thirty-three years; height about 5 feet 4 inches. He has a fair complexion, light-brown hair, and blue eyes. Any information would be thankfully received.—Address MRS. WM. MCGRATH (Belle Silk), 120 Hilsboro Ave., Edwardsville, Ill.

REICHMEIER, JOHN C. A native of Austria, resided in Los Angeles, California from December, 1905, to July, 1906, at which time he disappeared. His uncle, Wenzel Reichmeier, desires any information as to him. If he is dead, would like to know when he died. An estate awaits him or his heirs. Send information to the undersigned.—P. C. HUGHES, Box 324, Sawtelle, Calif.

LYNCH, MISS BARBARA. Last heard of in Detroit, Michigan. Any one knowing her whereabouts or where she lives please write.—Address MRS. N. C. CLENDENIN, 116 Seventh St., Parkersburg, W. Va.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

DEMPSEY, RAYMOND S. "Soda-squirt." Age 21; born Louisville, Ky. He may be recognized by scar across top of nose, scar back of head and tattoo on left forearm. Last heard of Chicago, 1915. Write quickly, as I am going across.—Address E. H. DEMPSEY, Chief Yeoman, Steam Engineering, Navy Department, Washington, D. C.

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SPELLIT, L. (LIL GURRY). Age 40. Has dark-blue eyes, chestnut-brown hair, slim build; weighs 127 lbs. Last seen and heard of in Brooklyn. May be in Canada now. Any one knowing her whereabouts please notify me. She will hear something to her advantage.—Address WILLIAM SPELLIT, 969 Rockaway Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

ANDERSON, WILLIAM HAMILTON. Born 1839 or 40 and lived in Missouri till he went to California about 1880 to 1902, where he died and left quite an estate. The heirs and friends are invited to communicate with the undersigned.—Address P. C. HUGHES, Box 324, Sawtelle, California.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

WILLIAMS, BURTON ALBERT. (Father.) Last heard from nine years ago. He is about fifty-one or fifty-two years old; 5 feet 8 or 9 inches tall; has scar on his right check-bone; has blue eyes, dark hair, and sandy mustache, and is a Northern man by birth. He was once district deputy for the National Benevolent Society for the State of Mississippi and manager of the Chickasaw Wagon Factory in Houston, Miss. Any information concerning him would be greatly appreciated.—Address MRS. IRENE THOMPSON, 832 No. 21 St., Birmingham, Ala.

THE following have been inquired for in full in either the First December or Mid-December issues of *Adventure*. They can get the name of the inquirer from this magazine:

AMARANTE, Francisco de Paula; Barringer, Mrs. Lavinia May; Chase, S.; Fillingham, Fred L. (Husband); Gilday, John E.; High, Charlie, or Aubrey, Godfrey; Johnson, Harry C.; Lagota, Nellie, Annie and Minnie; Judson, Robert A.; Mierisch, Charles L.; Stinson, William J.; Ward, W. N.; Whittington, Everett; Winston, Ernst.

MISCELLANEOUS — Brewer, Buchner, "Lizzie" Prouty, "Pop" Caspers, Clarke and numerous others of the old "Quarantine" squad; "Shun" Boys of the 213th A. S. Batt, C. E. F. American Legion who were at Camp Borden, Ontario, especially Joe Voger or George Zinzle.

MANUSCRIPTS UNCLAIMED

HASTLAR GAL BREATH; Ruth Gilfillan; Lee Hays; Jack P. Robinson; Ray Ozmer; Christian Baun.

NUMBERS L. T. 284, C. 293, W. 311, W. 312, L. T. 343. Please send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at address given us do not reach you.—Address J. E. COX, care *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

MID-JANUARY ADVENTURE

Two complete novelettes, a serial and eight stirring short stories will await you between the covers of the Mid-January number, in your hands on December 18th. You will find:

RABBIT: PHILOSOPHER. A Complete Novelette — *By Charles Beadle*
An unusual story of adventure in Morocco and the great deserts of Northern Africa.

THE SILVER SADDLE. A Complete Novelette — *By Everett Saunders*
A tale of cowboys in their native element, the great annual riding contest.

THE DEVILS OWN — *By Gordon Young*
Out of the storm and the wreck they are washed up together on an uninhabited South Sea Island beach, a rough sailor and a young girl of gentle breeding.

FOXED — *By Atreus von Schrader*
A story of the racetrack—and the tricks which those on the inside have to keep guard against.

THE TALE OF ERIC SVENDSEN — *By Janet Whitcomb*
A weird story of the sea and a ship which sailed under queer masters.

BETTER SO — *By Clyde B. Hough*
To Alaska this tale will take you, with a prospector who after years of search sees a fortune within his grasp.

THE COOL HAND — *By Russell A. Boggs*
They are an evil crowd—the *Huskies*—but when they meet *Joe Reilly* the program is slightly changed.

THE RABBIT IN THE BRESH-PILE — *By Hapsburg Liebe*
City people are not often anxious to pay big money for a worthless stretch of Tennessee land. That's why this story is written.

THE CONSTRUCTIVE INSULT — *By Eugene P. Lyle, Jr.*
A tale of the early days of St. Louis when the code of honor was a stickler, and when dueling pistols settled disputes out of court.

THE BROOCH OF TLAYA. Part II — *By Anne Throop Craig and Louise Rice*
In the second part of this tale of old Scotland, *Queen Tlaya's* troubles are complicated by the arrival of another band—under the command of *Red Sweynie.*

DOBIE'S DIFFICULTIES — *By W. C. Tuttle*
Poor *Dobie* has difficulty finding a suitable occupation, but at last is comfortably seated as a stage-coach guard—for a few miles.

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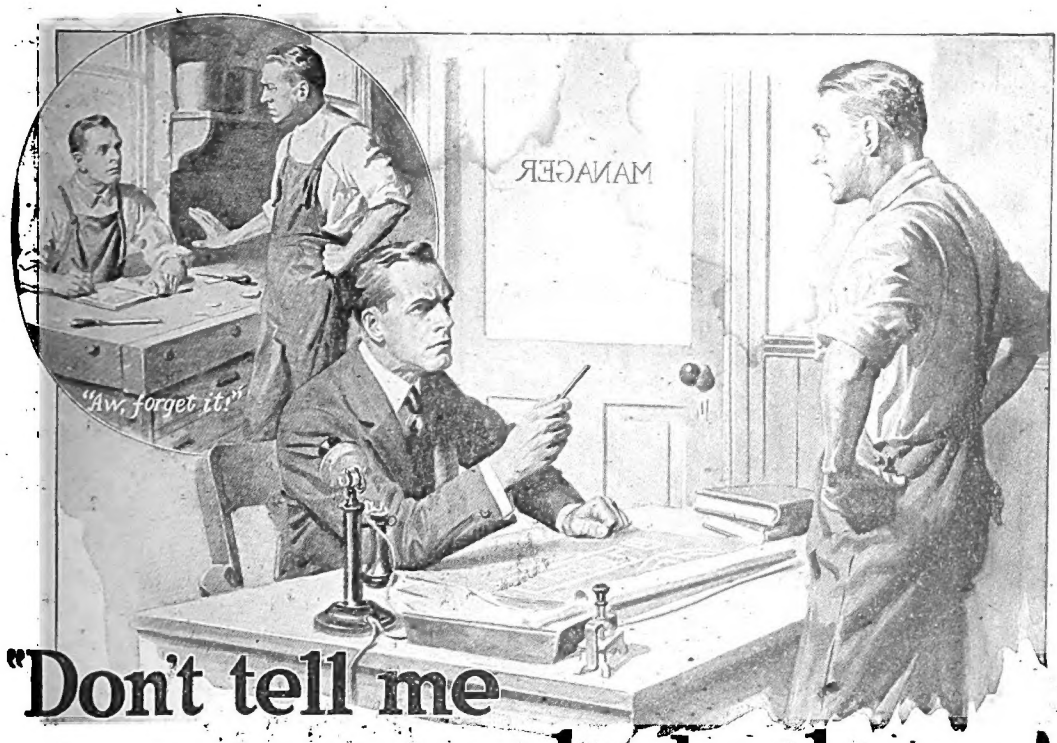

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- ☐ Telephone Work
- ☐ MECHANICAL ENGINEER
- ☐ Mechanical Draftsman
- ☐ Machine Shop Practice
- ☐ Toolmaker
- ☐ Gas Engine Operating
- ☐ CIVIL ENGINEER
- ☐ Surveying and Mapping
- ☐ MINE FOREMAN OR ENGINEER
- ☐ STATIONARY ENGINEER
- ☐ Marine Engineer
- ☐ Ship Draftsman
- ☐ ARCHITECT
- ☐ Contractor and Builder
- ☐ Architectural Draftsman
- ☐ Concrete Builder
- ☐ Structural Engineer
- ☐ PLUMBING AND HEATING
- ☐ Sheet Metal Worker
- ☐ Textile Overseer or Supt.
- ☐ CHEMIST
- ☐ SALESMANSHIP
- ☐ ADVERTISING
- ☐ Window Trimmer
- ☐ Show Card Writer
- ☐ Sign Painter
- ☐ Railroad Trainman
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- ☐ Cartooning
- ☐ BOOKKEEPER
- ☐ Stenographer and Typist
- ☐ Cert. Public Accountant
- ☐ TRAFFIC MANAGER
- ☐ Railway Accountant
- ☐ Commercial Law
- ☐ GOOD ENGLISH
- ☐ Teacher
- ☐ Common School Subjects
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ CIVIL SERVICE
- ☐ Railway Mail Clerk
- ☐ AUTOMOBILE OPERATING
- ☐ Auto Repairing
- ☐ Navigation
- ☐ AGRICULTURE
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